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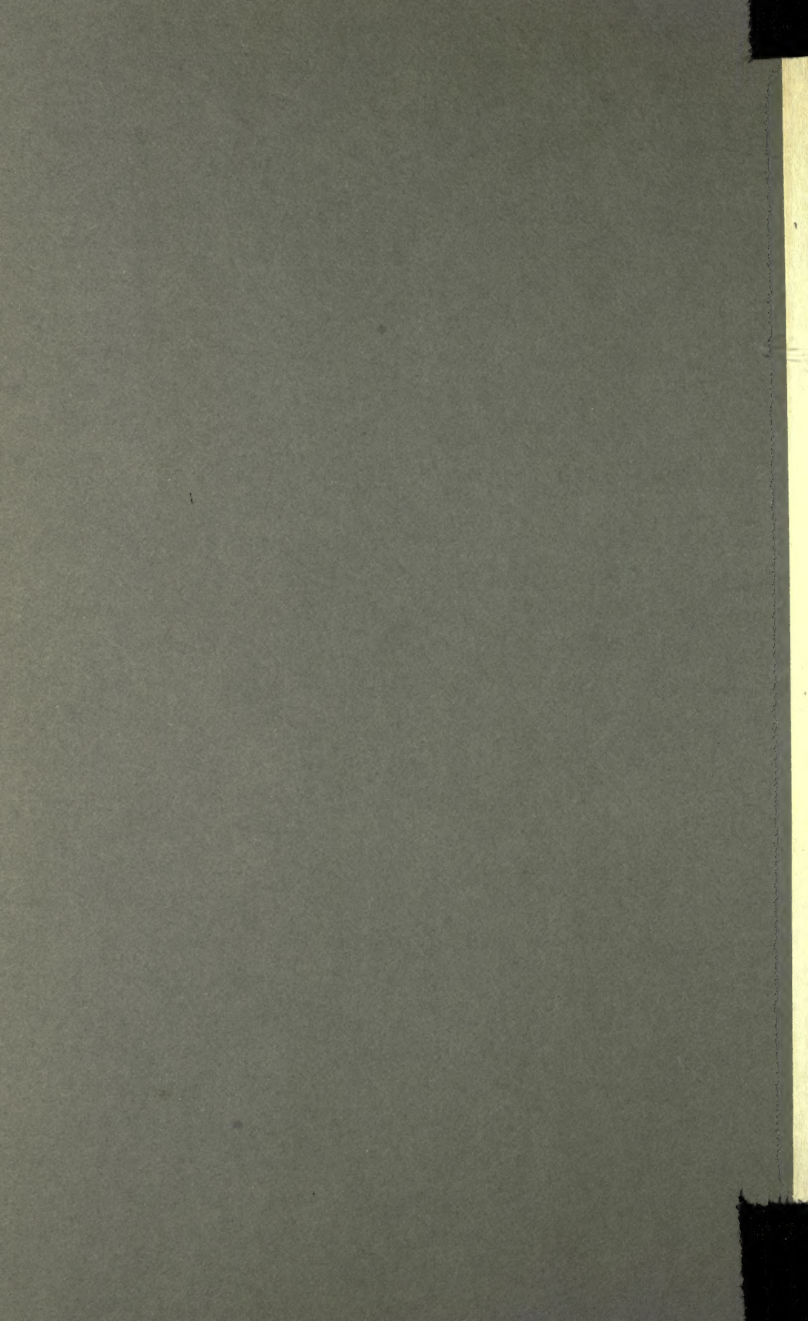
ADVERTISING APRIL

By HERBERT FARJEON  
and HORACE HORSNELL

PR  
6011  
A68A74  
1922

LONDON. BASIL BLACKWELL.  
THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD

Imprimatur  
The British  
Drama  
League



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The British Drama  
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Drama No. 4

Advertising  
April

Herbert Farjeon  
and  
Horace Horsnell

*This Play has been selected for publication by  
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League.*

# ADVERTISING APRIL

or The Girl who made the  
Sunshine Jealous

A Comedy in III Acts by

Herbert Farjeon & Horace Horsnell

Oxford Basil Blackwell

*Publisher to the Shakespeare Head Press  
of Stratford-upon-Avon*

1922

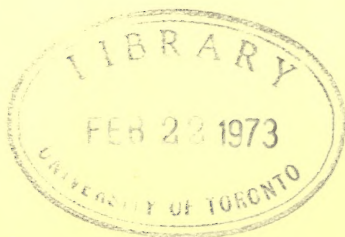
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this Play should be addressed to Mr R. Golding Bright  
of 20 Green Street, Leicester Square, London, WC 2*

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# Scenes and Characters

ACT I. *A room in Hobart's house at Bedford Park. A Summer morning*

ACT II. *A marquee in the Grounds of Peveril House. Four weeks later*

ACT III. *Same as Act I. The following morning*

APRIL MAWNE, a film star

EDMUND HOBART, her husband and press agent

MRS TRIMMER, her factotum, confidant & dresser

POPPY, her maidservant

HORACE, secretary to Hobart

TOM, a photographer

POTTS, an employee

MERVYN JONES, a modern young man

RACHEL SHAW, a modern young woman

A PRINCESS

A LADY-IN-WAITING

LORD PEVERIL





# Advertising April

OR

## The Girl who made the Sunshine Jealous

A Comedy in Three Acts

**S**CENE: *A room in HOBART'S house in Bedford Park. Summer morning. HOBART, glass of whiskey in hand, pacing up and down as he dictates. HORACE, writing at table. MRS TRIMMER, sewing at window.*

**H**OBART. 'And in conclusion. In conclusion, girls. Let me assure you. That success. In the Silent Drama. Does not depend. On the possession of. A film face . . . A film face . . . H'm . . . A film face . . .' [*drinks.*]

**T**RIMMER. People talk a lot of nonsense about film faces, but *I've* never been able to make out what they are.

**H**OBART. Good for you, Trim! Excellent! 'A film face. Note of exclamation! What *is* a film face? People talk a lot of nonsense about film faces. But *I've* never been able to make out. What they are. Acting, believe me. Is more than skin deep. You don't need a special kind of face for acting. Any more than you need a special kind of face for. Cooking an omelette. Or. [*Pours out whiskey.*] Selling a bottle of. [*Drinks.*] Eau de Cologne . . . That's horse sense, isn't it, Horace?

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HORACE. Rather, Mr Hobart.

HOBART. Good. 'Selling a bottle of Eau de Cologne. New paragraph. Beauty, in any event. Is not a *sine qua non*. In film acting. Take my own case. Everybody knows I don't rely on my good looks. I won't pretend I never use face cream. I won't pretend I never powder my nose. I won't pretend my lips are entirely innocent of. [*Drinks.*] The lip-stick . . .' All right, Horace?

HORACE. Rather, Mr Hobart.

HOBART. Good. 'But I don't pose as a beauty. And it certainly isn't beauty that has got me. Where I am. After all, an actress's face is only a secondary consideration. The primary consideration is. H'm. Ha. Her soul.'

TRIMMER. Oh, come off it, Eddie!

HOBART. Not a bit. 'Yes; girls, her soul. An artist must have a soul. Capital S for soul. A Soul for tragedy. A Soul for comedy. A Soul—whether it be for sob-stuff or slapstick. And, believe me, if you want to go on the films. The question to ask yourself is. Not. Have I a film face? But. Have I a film soul?' . . . Good enough?

HORACE. A I.

HOBART. Right. We might end there. Head the article, 'Have you a Film Soul? By April Mawne,' and give it to my wife to sign when you've typed it out. And then send it to the Editor of the *Girls' Gazette*. And put at the end: 'Next

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week Miss April Mawne will contribute a fascinating article entitled . . . er . . . Do Film Actresses Make Good Wives?’

TRIMMER. Do they? You ought to know.

HOBART. Haven’t thought about it. H’m. Which’d make the best article? [Enter POPPY.

POPPY. Please, sir.

HOBART. What is it? Can’t you see I’m busy?

POPPY. Yes, sir, but—please, sir—there’s a man downstairs wants to see Miss Mawne.

HOBART. Well, he can’t. Nobody can see Miss Mawne without an appointment. You know that.

POPPY. Yes, sir. But he said it was urgent. I thought, perhaps . . .

HOBART. What’s he want?

POPPY. He wouldn’t say, sir. He said he wouldn’t tell anybody but Miss Mawne herself.

HOBART. Then he won’t tell anybody at all. What’s his infernal name?

POPPY. He didn’t give his name. He seemed so excited. I couldn’t get a word in.

HOBART. Send him away. Send him away. Oh, and if it’s an autograph album, tell him Miss Mawne’s extremely busy, but if he’ll leave it, she’ll try to find time to sign it before the end of next week. Run along. [Exit POPPY.

HOBART. H’m. Just take this down for circularization. ‘Among the many presents. Which Miss

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Mawne has recently received. From her numerous admirers. Is one in the shape of. The shape of. Is one in the shape of. A cobra.' We haven't done cobras, have we, Horace?

HORACE. No, rather not.

HOBART. Good. Where's the Nuttall? Thanks. Co-co-co-ah! cobra! 'Is-one-in-the-shape-of-a-cobra. Or. To give the beast its full title. Cobra de capello—double l o. This unusual pet. Came to her all the way from. The East Indies. Having been sent to her by a tea-planter. Who had been much struck by her performance in. "Venus Versus Virtue."'

TRIMMER. A cobra! You do pile it on!

HOBART. Don't alarm yourself. There isn't a cobra. I don't say there is. I say she's received a present *in the shape of a cobra.*

TRIMMER. That's just as much a lie as the other.

HOBART. Lie! Lie! Good God! That isn't a lie! It's publicity. And where would April Mawne be today *without* publicity? I don't say my wife isn't the finest actress on the screen. She is. But if it hadn't been for me, the damn fool public would never have known it.

TRIMMER. Bless you, we know that. April would never be where she is to-day but for you.

HOBART. And that's a fact. Didn't I invent the phrase that got her there—April Mawne—the Girl Who Makes the Sunshine Jealous? Didn't

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I get her lost for five days on the Trossachs, so that all the newspapers were sending out reporters trying to find her body? Didn't I get all the children on all the beaches in all the seaside towns last summer picking out her name in stones and seaweed and bathing in Free April Mawne Bathing Dresses? And when the *Daily Cry* ran its Film Popularity Competition, didn't I get her in ahead of the Gasper by a majority of two to one?

TRIMMER. That's true. Really, it's a knock-out how actors and actresses used to get along at all in the old days.

HOBART. And how do we know they did? Edmund Kean—Mrs Siddons—and all that crush! They may have been the goods—I've no doubt they were the goods—but how do we know there weren't a lot more—ten times as clever as they were—never heard of—simply languishing in obscurity—all for the want of a little publicity? The public has got to be told, and it's my job to tell them. [*To HORACE*] Now then—where'd we got to about that cobra? [*Enter POPPY.*] Well, what is it now?

POPPY. Please, sir, I can't get rid of him. I've tried and tried, but it's no use. He won't go.

HOBART. Won't go?

POPPY. No, sir. He says nothing will keep him from Miss Mawne, not if it's a—not if it's a—

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HOBART. Not if it's a what?

POPPY. Not if it's a hydro-headed dragon, he said, sir, breathing fire and brimstone. That's what he said, sir.

HOBART. Good God! What's the public coming to?

TRIMMER. Did he say anything else?

POPPY. Oh, yes, Mrs Trimmer, he said a whole lot. He asked me to take a message. 'Tell her she's in danger,' he said. And then he said he wouldn't keep her more than—more than—

HOBART. More than what?

POPPY. More than a *hour*, sir.

HOBART. An hour? An *hour*?

POPPY. But I can't get rid of him, sir, really, sir, I can't!

HOBART. Well, if *you* can't, the police can. What's the number of the police station, Horace?

TRIMMER. There, don't go making a scene. We don't want policemen fussing round here.

HOBART. Why not? Nice little police-court case! Make a damn good story. 'April Mawne Besieged by Admirer—Scenes in Bedford Park—Strange Story of Hydra-Headed Dragon.' Be on the bills, probably.

TRIMMER. The fellow's mad, more like it. Nice advertisement for April, having a following of loonies! Here! I'll go and talk to him. If I can't get rid of him one way, I'll get rid of him another. You leave him to me. [*Exit with POPPY.*]

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HOBART [*taking a turn or two to cool himself*]. Not more than an hour! Good God!

HORACE. Bit of a neck, hasn't he?

HOBART. Not more than an hour! He'll be asking for a week-end next! [HORACE *titters*.] H'm. Well. Letter to Lord Peveril. 17, Peak Place, Mayfair. 'My Lord. In answer to your kind letter. Miss April Mawne requests me to say that she will be delighted. No. That she will be pleased. To assist in the fête. Which you are so generously organizing on behalf of.' What the devil is it on behalf of?

HORACE. Widows and Orphans of Celibate Seamen.

HOBART. Yes. Yes. 'On behalf of the Widows and Orphans of Celibate Seamen. Miss Mawne suggests. That it might be a popular attraction. If she were to appear before the public personally. In three dimensions. And will be pleased to reconstruct. The Harem Scene. From her great film, "A Bit of Turkish Delight." Believe me, my Lord. Your Lordship's most obedient servant.' Type the signature in capitals, and initial for me, per pro.

*Enter APRIL, gaily, humming.*

APRIL. Morning, children! Eddie, old boy, I'll trouble you for a fiver!

HOBART. Five pounds! My dear April! Whatever for? Can't you send a cheque?

APRIL. I'll *take* one, if you like. She's done it! She's done it!

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HOBART. What d'you mean? Who's done what?

APRIL. The little Gasper. She's lost you your bet. She's hooked her fish all right. And lands him on Friday week.

HOBART. What! The Duke's not marrying her?

APRIL. At St Margaret's at two. [*Waves letter at him.*] She's sent me an advance notice. *Sweet* of her, isn't it? Knowing how we'd feel about it.

HOBART. Don't you believe it. The Duke's not fool enough for that. This is just a press stunt. Or else she's pulling your leg.

APRIL. She's pulling it on his notepaper, then.

HOBART. What's she say?

APRIL. Ahem! 'One hundred and six St James's Square, S.W.'—under a large blue crown!—'My *darling* April'—isn't it wicked!—'I feel sure you will be *delighted* to hear that my wedding to the Duke of Roxwell is to be solemnized at St Margaret's, Westminster, at two sharp on Friday the 11th inst. Roxwell and I are keeping it a secret till to-morrow. But, knowing how *interested* you would be, I felt I simply must tell *you*. And, of course, I know I can rely on *you* not to let it get into the Press.' Can she, Eddie?

HOBART. Psha!

APRIL. 'Roxwell is a perfect *darling* and gives me *everything* I want'—not forgetting the large blue crown, Edmund!—'and I simply couldn't be a happier girl if I tried. It is nice to think that I shall still see something of you after I am married—'



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HOBART. Hullo! is she going to ask you up to the Castle?

APRIL.—‘because Roxwell has promised not to insist on *my* giving up *my* career in the movies as long as I don’t insist on *him* giving up *his* seat in the Cabinet.’—Castles in the air, Eddie, darling! —‘Tell Eddie that Pinkerton’s managing the publicity for me, and I guess there’ll be *some* publicity too! Ever, darling, your *most* affectionate, Paula.’ Well, Eddie, is that good enough?

HOBART. A damn sight too good! How the deuce has she wangled it? The old man’s still sane. He only joined the Cabinet last week. No wonder the Government’s so rocky.

APRIL. You’d better ask Pinkerton how she managed it. It was his stunt all through. Now *that’s* what I call good business.

HOBART. Pretty dirty work, if you ask me. Taking advantage of an old man. Pinkerton ought to be shown up. The Gasper! Duchess of Roxwell! Good God!

APRIL. Oh, good luck to her! She won’t like it.

HOBART. Well, no use crying over spilt milk. But that puts it up to us all right. We’ll have to get busy. Horace, give me Burke’s *Peerage*.

APRIL. Too late for that, Eddie. You can’t dispose of me that way. You should have thought of that before you married me.

HOBART. Roxwell . . . Roxwell . . .

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HORACE. The Dukes are at the beginning, aren't they, Mr Hobart?

HOBART. You get ahead with that copy. That's your damned *Girls' Gazette* stuff, April.

[HORACE *gathers up papers and goes out.*]

APRIL. What am I telling them this week?

HOBART. Never mind about that.

APRIL. Oh, but I *love* writing to my girls. You do it so nicely. And how they wallow in it, poor dears!

HOBART [*pacing to and fro with Burke*]. That stuff's all right in its way. But it doesn't cut enough ice.

We had the Gasper beat. Now she goes and pulls off a thing like that.

APRIL. Well, what are we going to do about it?

HOBART. There's only one thing *to do*. We've got to obliterate the Duchess of Roxwell!

[*Bangs down Burke on table.*]

APRIL. Not murder, Eddie! I won't consent to that!

HOBART. Duchess of Roxwell! Just the goods Pinkerton likes handling. Fine old title. Why the hell can't she retire on it?

APRIL. Don't worry, old boy. You'll think of something.

[*Enter TRIMMER.*]

TRIMMER. Well, he's a cough-drop and no mistake. He's gone. But what a flow!

HOBART. Somebody worrying to see *you*, April.

APRIL. What did he say, Trim?

TRIMMER. Say! What didn't he say? Had the sauce to call me Cerberus. At my time of life! 'Why, you great good-for-nothing six foot of misery,' I

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said, 'don't you know better at your age than to come ringing bells and frightening respectable people's parlourmaids out of their wits?' 'Time will prove,' he said. And I said I couldn't wait for that, 'op it! Mark my words, dearie, we haven't seen the last of him by long chalks.

HOBART. Damned impertinence.

TRIMMER. Hullo! what's wrong with his nibs?

APRIL. The Gasper's going to marry a Duke, Trim, and cut us all out. And Eddie's sorry he married me, because now I can't marry one too. He'd like me to be a bigamist.

TRIMMER. Oh, don't say things like that, dearie. 'Tisn't respectable. You really mean to say that little trollop's got a *Duke*?

APRIL. She will have on Friday week.

TRIMMER. Good Gord! If that don't put the tin hat on everything!

APRIL. No, Trim, a large blue crown. Her Grace, the Gasper!

TRIMMER. Her Grace, my foot! If he knew all I know about her . . .

HOBART. I've got it, April! She's going into the House of Lords. Well—*you* go into the House of Commons. Put up for Parliament. It's been done, of course. But not by a people's darling like you. You'd play old Harry with any constituency in the country. And once you were in! By God, they'd sit up!

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TRIMMER. Don't you go mixing yourself up with a lot of stuffy M.P.'s, dearie. Once you start that game, taken unawares by Pathy's Gazette's about all you'll have time for. What about your film career?

APRIL. 'Fraid you'll have to think again, Eddie.

[Enter POPPY.]

HOBART. My good girl, have you nothing better to do than keep on trotting in and out here?

POPPY. It's a telegram for the mistress, sir.

HOBART. Well, don't stand gibbering there. Give it to her. Give it to her.

APRIL. Thank you, Poppy. [*Laughs as she reads it.*] No answer. [*Exit POPPY.*] My dear Eddie, I've clicked this time and no mistake. He's right off the deep end! [*Gives telegram to HOBART.*]

HOBART [*reading*]. 'Wild horses shan't keep me from you for both our sakes I beg let me see you any time any where Mervyn Jones.' Mervyn Jones! Mervyn Jones! That's the crazy fellow we used in *Pot Shots*.

APRIL. The man who's been writing me such perfectly heavenly love letters.

HOBART. That's the fellow. I put one of 'em into 'Love Letters I Have Received.' Where's this week's *Pot Shots*? Ah, here it is. 'Love Letters I Have Received. How Cinema Stars Keep Cupid Busy. By April Mawne.' [*Running finger down column.*] H'm . . . h'm . . . Here's the letter from

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the ass who wanted you to fly to Madagascar with him . . . And here's the one from that— Good God! what sort of a shoulder-head do you think they've given the letter from that lunatic who said you'd filled his heart with flowers? 'A Botanical Admirer!' Guys the stuff!

APRIL [*looking over his shoulder*]. Ah! there it is! [*Takes paper from him.*] 'But of all my love letters none have moved me more deeply than those addressed to me by a certain admirer living on the heights of Hampstead. I think you will agree with me that the following is worthy of an honourable place in any epistolary anthology . . . "April—I must write to you again to-night. Forgive me. I feel very humble. I don't hope ever to meet you. I don't want ever to meet you. I do not need to meet you. I know you without that. I know the simplicity of your spirit—the delicate debonair simplicity, so reminiscent of all that is best and purest in Mozart. I know the wild care-free flow of your eager soul, turbulent and gay as some romantic freshet skeltering over rocks in Celtic hills. I know the ardent, eternal, sparkling springtide in your heart, your heart that burgeons into beauty as buds burgeon into blossom in the hey-nony-no of the gallant month of May. And all this knowledge is enough for me. I am content, I bow my head. I wish I could take you to the top of some high mountain

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when the sun is rising, and there, kneeling before you in the new-flung noose of light, offer you my fierce, faint praises. . . .”

HOBART. This is almost literature, April!

APRIL. “But my tongue would only stammer, and I should have no speech for you. For love is speechless and truth is without a tongue. Enough that you will always be a beacon to me in the darkness, and that the memory of a face I have never seen will be the rudder of my little barque, as it adventures on the surging seas of life. I shall not write again, *Adios!*”

TRIMMER. That’s the stuff to give ’em!

APRIL. Ah, but he did write again. He couldn’t help it. Beautiful letters. The only love-letters I’ve ever kept. I hadn’t the heart to throw *them* into the waste-paper basket. So I laid them away in a secret drawer. In the attic. Tied up with lavender and ribbons. To read and weep over when I’m old.

TRIMMER. Soft music—slow curtain.

HOBART [*thinking aloud*]. He ought to come in useful somehow. Young poet. Oxford college. Probably well connected. Pertinacious as they make ’em. Hang it all, he may be famous some day.

APRIL. He says such heavenly things. Let him just go on admiring me, Eddie.

TRIMMER. From what I’ve seen of my young Romeo, you’ll be lucky if he leaves it at that,

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dearie. Bless you, I know *his* sort. Used to hang round *me* one time. I tell you, he's got it chronic.

APRIL. I know. But they get over it, poor dears.

TRIMMER. Maybe. But he's on the warpath now all right. With his letters and telegrams and assaults and batteries. Anybody'd think we were a G.P.O.

HOBART. Well we aren't. So far as he's concerned, we're a Dead Letter Office. And so long as we refuse to hold *any* communication of *any* kind—*[telephone bell rings]*. Hullo! Hullo! Yes. *[Pause]* Yes. Miss Mawne's press agent speaking. What's that? Go to *what*? Who the deuce are you? Mr What? Mervyn Jones! No, you damned well can't speak to her.

TRIMMER. There! What'd I tell you? He'll be coming down the chimney next.

HOBART *[still at 'phone]*. I've got better things to do than sit here all day listening to you. But you just understand this. If you come here again, I'll have you arrested. I'll have you locked up!

*[Bangs down receiver.]*

APRIL. Eddie! Eddie!

HOBART. That ought to settle him.

APRIL. Poor boy! It does seem rather a shame. He probably doesn't even know I'm married.

TRIMMER. Oh, a little thing like a husband wouldn't keep *his* sort out. Looks to me like one of these high-class Socialists. All for free bread in the morning, free fights in the afternoon, and

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free love at night when the cows come home.  
What about that divorce case in the *Sunday Echo*?  
*He was a Socialist.*

HOBART. By God! I've got it!

APRIL and TRIMMER. What?

HOBART. The stunt! The brain-wave! The way to  
put the wind up the Gasper!

APRIL. What is it?

HOBART. Divorce!

APRIL. Easy, old son. Let her get married first.  
It isn't decent to get divorced before you're  
married. Not even for Gaspers.

HOBART. Not her, you stupid. Us.

APRIL. Us? You and me? . . .

HOBART. Who'd care a bean about the Gasper and  
her rotten old Duke if April Mawne was down  
on her luck? I tell you there's nothing goes down  
with the public like trouble.

APRIL. But I don't know that I want a divorce. I've  
got used to you.

HOBART. Think of the sensation! 'April Mawne  
sues for Divorce.' That'd knock press and public  
and every damned stunt of Pinkerton's right in  
the eye.

APRIL. I suppose it would. But . . . You don't really  
mean it, Eddie.

HOBART. If you can think of anything better.

APRIL. But on what grounds? We don't fight. I  
don't even dislike you.



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HOBART. Soon find grounds. If Pinkerton can catch dukes for Gaspers, surely I can fix up an everyday little thing like a divorce for April Mawne!

APRIL. It isn't your capacity I doubt. Only it seemed . . . I don't know . . . Wouldn't it upset things rather?

TRIMMER [*with sudden excitement*]. There he is again. On the kerb. Looking up at the window.

HOBART. Confound the fool! Trim, if he comes badgering here, tell Poppy not to answer the door. And don't you have any truck with him either. Let him ring till he's blue in the face. He doesn't exist. [*Exit* TRIMMER.

APRIL. Of course, a nice divorce *would* be rather exciting. And I know I should look well in the dock and all that. But I don't want a divorce, Eddie. And wouldn't it be rather difficult anyway? You can't just order a divorce from the Stores, you know.

HOBART. Pooh! We've done more difficult things than that. What's a divorce? I can manage it.

APRIL. I'm not going to have you signing shady hotel registers, Eddie.

HOBART. I don't mind. You can't always consider yourself in business. I'll stand the racket.

APRIL. And where do *I* come in?

HOBART. On top. That's where you come in. April Mawne first, and the rest nowhere.

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APRIL. Well, *you* may like it, but . . .

HOBART. Good God, my dear girl, who's to like it if not you? *I'm* the one that's going to get it in the neck. *You'll* bring the action. Infidelity, cruelty, desertion, any damned thing you like. I don't care what the charges are. The blacker the better.

APRIL. Was ever a husband so self-sacrificing?

HOBART. Exactly. I'll beat you, I'll starve you, I'll snub you before the servants, I'll be a perfect martyr. Anything to pile on the agony. Just you figure it out. Beautiful gifted actress. Regular brute of a husband. Creating romance for others. Never a gleam for herself. A smile like sunshine and a heart like lead. Life behind the mask. Laugh Puncinello! Jury unanimous. Decree *nisi*. And good-bye Gasper!

APRIL. Good-bye Gasper and good-bye Eddie, too. [*Lighting cigarette.*] Suppose I'd rather live with you and let the Gasper rip? There *is* that, you know.

HOBART. Live with me? Of course you'll live with me! I don't mean to give you up, old girl. A divorce needn't make any difference. We can still live together.

APRIL. In sin! Eddie, I'm surprised at you.

HOBART. Sin! Don't be silly. It isn't sin. It's commonsense. Lots of people live together now-a-days—people who've never been married even once. Perfectly respectable. This isn't the Middle Ages.

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APRIL. I know that. But somehow, Eddie, I *like* feeling that I'm absolutely tied to you—bound to you with hoops of steel—that I'm your wife and can't get away. If I knew I could . . .

HOBART. Surely you don't think that, if you *weren't* my wife, you mightn't *want* to be?

APRIL [*lightly*]. You never know. It isn't right to put ideas like that into the child's head. And I think I'd rather remain married to you, Eddie.

HOBART. All right, all right! If that's how you feel about it, the idea's a wash-out . . . If you're content to let the Gasper mess up your career . . .

APRIL. I think you're perfectly inhuman, Eddie.

HOBART. And I think you're perfectly unreasonable. It's a jolly good idea.

APRIL. Well, it's an idea I don't like . . . What woman would?

HOBART. You're no ordinary woman, April. You're an artist. A temperamental artist. And temperamental artists can't live like other people. It's a known fact!

APRIL. You're very anxious to live like other artists all at once. [*Dramatically.*] Eddie, *who* is the woman?

HOBART. Woman? What woman?

APRIL. The other woman. My successor. What's her name? What's her publicity value?

HOBART. My dear April, have I ever given you the slightest cause . . .

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APRIL. Not that I know of. But you appear to be making a pretty good start now.

HOBART [*almost humanly*]. It seems to me, April, that I trust you a darned sight more than you trust me.

APRIL [*relenting*]. Of course I trust you, you old duffer! I'd trust you with Cleopatra, Helen of Troy and the whole of Salt Lake City thrown in.

HOBART. Well, then, what's the matter with the divorce? You think it over. You can do the injured wife on your head, and it'll double your bookings straight away.

APRIL. Oh, my bookings, my bookings!

[*Throws herself on to chesterfield.*]

HOBART. Of course, I know the idea wants getting used to. I've got to get used to it myself. But all I say is, it's jolly well worth considering. You turn it over in your mind.

[*Gathers up papers from table and goes out. MERVYN's hands and head appear over the edge of the balcony. He raises himself by the iron-work and quietly climbs over the little railing. Stands and brushes dust from hands and clothes, adjusts tie and collar, peers in, sees no one, and enters.*]

MERVYN. The fortress yields!

APRIL [*jumping up*]. Oh! Who are you? Who let you in? What do you want?

MERVYN [*slowly drinking her in*]. April Mawne!

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APRIL. Yes. I'm April Mawne. Who are you?

MERVYN [*impressively*]. Mervyn Jones.

APRIL [*echoing*]. Mervyn Jones . . . How did you get in?

MERVYN. On the wings of the wind. I climbed the drain-pipe.

APRIL. But how exciting! . . . Didn't anybody see you?

MERVYN. I don't know. I don't care. I had to get to you somehow.

APRIL [*backing a little*]. . . . Have you come here to make love to me?

MERVYN. Love? Heaven forbid!

APRIL. Then why?

MERVYN. I think I came to curse you . . . I don't know why I came.

APRIL. You've been ringing and knocking and telegraphing and telephoning and risking your neck on drain-pipes, and don't know what for?

MERVYN. Yes, I do know what for. I came for my letters. I want my letters back.

APRIL [*businesslike*]. Very well. Why couldn't you say so? I'll send them. [*Moving towards window.*] Can I help you down?

MERVYN [*not moving*]. *When* you send them, I trust you'll not forget to enclose the usual form.

APRIL. I'm afraid I don't understand.

MERVYN. 'The Editor regrets that he is unable to make use of the enclosed manuscript . . .'

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APRIL. I still don't know *what* you mean.

MERVYN. Don't know what I mean? Look here! here! [*Whisking out copy of paper and brandishing it.*] What's this?

APRIL. Oh, do you read *Pot Shots*?

MERVYN. *Pot Shots!* Ye gods, *Pot Shots!*

APRIL. You shall have your letters.

MERVYN. All but one. There is one letter you can never restore. It is beyond redemption—bartered for a mess of pottage to the purveyor of soul-destroying garbage like *this*—for every Peeping Tom to lick his lips over.

APRIL. I'm sorry if your feelings have been hurt. Perhaps I have been thoughtless.

MERVYN. Then it *was* your doing? So much for my hopes.

APRIL. What hopes?

MERVYN. There are miserable, bestial, creeping, crawling things known as press agents. You have a press agent. I spoke to him just now on the telephone. And I thought—I prayed with all the might of my soul—that *he* might have been the culprit—that he'd gone behind your back—that you didn't know—

APRIL. My press agent is not miserable or bestial, and he neither creeps nor crawls. Whatever he does, he does with my approval. I'm sorry about your letter. I've said I'm sorry. Please go away. [*Sitting down.*] You've upset me very much.

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MERVYN. That's the devastating part of it. I came here *to* upset you, and now that I *have* upset you, I can't bear it. I feel as Hamlet must have felt when he chastized his mother. [*Shaking his fist.*] Ye gods, if there was only a Polonius here!

APRIL. Well, there isn't, so you'd better be sensible and go home.

MERVYN. Do you know what Hamlet said to his mother? [*Declamatory.*] 'Such an act, that blurs the grace and blush of modesty.' And then she said he'd cleft her heart in twain. And he said, 'O throw away the worser part of it, And live the purer with the other half.' That's what I say to you, you—*actress!*

APRIL. Are you on the stage?

MERVYN. Heaven forbid!

APRIL. Why Heaven forbid? There's nothing the matter with being on the stage.

MERVYN. Except that all the world *isn't* a stage. And all the men and women *aren't* merely players.

APRIL. Well, *I* am, and I'm quite content to be.

MERVYN. And quite content to go on acting after the play is over. To treat the most intimate and sacred expressions of feeling as tags for the gallery. To turn everything you yourself say and do into copy, copy, copy, for fools to feed on.

APRIL. I *don't* turn everything I say and do into copy. You've no right . . .

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MERVYN. *I've* no right! *You've* no right. Justify these if you can. [*Producing cuttings.*] 'Some of my Dreams,'—by April Mawne. 'The Unhappiest Day in My Life,'—by April Mawne. 'My Favourite Menu,'—by April Mawne. 'Why I Believe in Fairies,'—'Is the Stout Woman Coming In?'—'Love Letters I have Received,'—all, all By April Mawne.

APRIL. Well, one must keep one's name before the public. Everybody does it.

MERVYN. But you're not everybody. I don't care a fig for the others. It's just because you're different that I can't bear you to cheapen yourself like this. Each time I see another toshy article under your name, another fatuous anecdote about you, another idiotic interview, I feel I want to rush away and bury my head in the Sands of the Sahara.

APRIL. It's nice of you to feel so strongly about me, of course. But really . . . what do you expect?

MERVYN. I expect you to be real. I expect you to live a real life.

APRIL. And give up acting?

MERVYN. Good Heavens, no! But don't you realise that you're missing the deepest beauty, the profoundest truth given by the gods to this glorious, this astounding world? I want you to inhale that beauty and that truth as I inhale them, with every sentient breath.



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APRIL. Beauty? Truth? But I do. I simply love beautiful things—roses and sundials and ivy and Virginia creeper and—Virginia water and all that. And I weep, really weep, over some of my parts. Real tears, not glycerine ones like Paula Palermo's.

MERVYN. 'How I Shed Real Tears.'

APRIL. You're not very complimentary, are you?

MERVYN. Complimentary! I came to chasten, not to compliment you. But when you look at me like that, with those clear, bewildering eyes, I can't—I can't stand up against you.

APRIL [*with a sigh of self-satisfaction*]. That's better. I knew you'd be sorry for the horrid things you've said.

MERVYN. I'm not sorry. I refuse to be sorry. When I think of the way you live and the way you ought to live . . .

APRIL. How do you know how I live?

MERVYN. All the world knows. Your dressmakers, your toilets, your Pomeranians, your supper-parties, your advertised appearances at this restaurant and that—appointments, appointments, a ceaseless round of appointments—and you call that life!

APRIL. Well, what do *you* call life?

MERVYN. Have you ever bathed, as I have, in a forest pool at twilight, with the trees all silent and mysterious, and a heron winging, like a ghost, through the quivering stillness?

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APRIL [*matter-of-fact*]. No.

MERVYN. Do you know what it is to hear the call of Diana's horn, as you lie awake at night in some moonlit glade?

APRIL [*positive*]. Diana's horn! No!

MERVYN. Has Nature ever been more than a bouquet to you? Have you ever felt the lift of the wind on some springy upland? Have you ever crashed into the crater of a great wave? Do you understand what Spring really is—not the pretty-pretty Springtime of the pictures, but the savage, pagan, life-creating Spring?

APRIL [*half-mocking*]. No-o-o!

MERVYN. And you think that you have lived! You never even get a chance to know the joy of living with your *kind*, away from the crowd—I tell you!—a curtained room by firelight—music—friends—drawn together by a Bach quartette or a Scarlatti fugue. Do you know what *that* means?

APRIL [*seemingly affected*]. No!

MERVYN. Do you ever read poetry—*real* poetry, I mean—Shakespeare, Swinburne, De la Mare?

APRIL [*seemingly overcome*]. No!

MERVYN. Then where is your basis? What will be your refuge when the supper-parties fail you and the interviewers call no more? Consider the future, and decide!

APRIL [*breaking the silence*]. Really, you know, you're wasted. [*Touching the outer corners of her*

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*eyes with her finger-tip.*] It isn't everyone who can get it across like that.

MERVYN [*moving towards her*]. Oh, April, if only . . . if only . . . [*Enter HOBART.*

HOBART. Well, April, have you thought it over? . . . I beg your pardon. I didn't see there was a visitor.

APRIL. Yes, Eddie. I've made a new friend. Let me introduce you. Mr Mervyn Jones—my husband.

HOBART *and* MERVYN. Good God!

HOBART. Mervyn Jones!

MERVYN. Your husband! [*Pulling himself together.*] I'm very glad to meet you, Mr Mawne.

HOBART [*putting hands behind back*]. Mawne! My name is not Mawne, sir. My name is Hobart.

MERVYN. Forgive me. I'm rather taken by surprise. I didn't know your wife was married.

HOBART. Well, we don't go shouting it from the house-tops, young man. So you bribed my servants, eh?

MERVYN. Your servants, Mr Hobart, are probably incorruptible. I climbed the drain-pipe.

HOBART. Climbed the drain-pipe! [*Crossing to balcony.*] Pretty tidy drop, I must say. [*Aside to APRIL.*] We ought to have had the camera on that. D'you think he'd give a repeat performance?

MERVYN. I must apologize, Mr Hobart, for my rather unceremonious intrusion. Frankly, I had no idea you existed. The fact is, I wrote your wife some letters—

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HOBART. Damned good letters, too, Mr Jones. You needn't be ashamed of them.

MERVYN [*large-heartedly*]. I'm glad she showed them to you. It was very open and honourable of her. But she need *not* have shown them to her press agent.

HOBART. Her press agent!

MERVYN. No wonder you're surprised. But what I say is true. Your wife showed these letters to her press agent—

HOBART. The devil she did!

MERVYN. One of them was printed—

HOBART. The devil it was!

MERVYN. And I have come to get the rest of my letters back, before that cad turns them into a serial. If you will allow me to say so, Mr Hobart, your wife seems to be much more in the control of her press agent than she ought to be. In fact, the fellow ought to be thrashed.

HOBART. Thrashed! Thrashed! What's the matter with him?

MERVYN. He's ruining your wife's life. That's all.

HOBART [*blazing*]. It may interest you to learn, young man, that *I* am Miss Mawne's press agent.

MERVYN. You? Her husband?

HOBART. Her husband *and* her press agent. And I'd have you know—

APRIL. Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't bicker, children. [*To* HOBART] Have a cigarette and be sensible. [*To* MERVYN] You, too, Mr Jones.

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[*She offers the box to each in turn as they stand facing each other.*] Now then, where were we? We're trying to shoot the wrong scene. It's all mixed up. [To MERVYN] *You* shouldn't have come in when *you* did. [To HOBART] And *you* shouldn't have come in when *you* did. I'm stage-managing this. Mr Jones is not the villain—though I don't quite know what he is. And Eddie certainly shan't be thrashed, shall you, Eddie? So please apologize to each other before we go any further.

MERVYN. I apologize.

HOBART. I don't.

APRIL. Eddie!

HOBART. What the devil does he mean by saying I'm ruining your life?

APRIL. Of course you're not, Eddie. But Mr Jones is kind enough to take a—a kind of fatherly interest in me. And he—well, he was just making a few suggestions.

MERVYN. It's all this superficiality that's so intolerable.

HOBART. Superficiality! What the deuce do you mean?

MERVYN. Miss Mawne knows what I mean.

HOBART. Perhaps she'll be good enough to enlighten *me*? . . .

APRIL. Well, Eddie, Mr Jones thinks—it's rather difficult to explain—but Mr Jones thinks—he thinks I ought to—to *bathe* more.

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[MERVYN *shakes his fists in despair.*

HOBART. Bathe? Good God! What for?

APRIL. Oh, not *ordinary* bathing, Eddie. Not swimming-baths or anything like that. But—well—*real* bathing—in forest pools—

HOBART. Most unhealthy!

APRIL. Or it can be in the sea—if it's *tremendously* rough . . .

HOBART. Do you want to drown her?

[MERVYN *buries his face in his hands.*

APRIL. Oh, I'm not putting it properly. It's really very fine, Eddie. He wants me to—to have my friends in to—to play the piano.

HOBART. My dear April . . .

APRIL. Well, he says that Spring isn't at all what I think it is . . . oh, *you* tell him, Mr Jones.

MERVYN [*rushing to door*]. I can't stand this. [*Turning.*] But for God's sake, Mr Hobart, do let us live real lives.

HOBART. Real lives?

MERVYN. Yes, stop this shamming and be ourselves.

HOBART. Real lives! Ha! 'Should we Live Real Lives?'

MERVYN [*to APRIL*]. Good-bye. We shall meet again. [*Encountering TRIMMER in the doorway.*]  
Out of my way, Cerberus! [*Exit.*

HOBART [*pacing*]. H'm. Real lives. Real lives. Should We Live Real Lives?

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APRIL [*seizing MERVYN's hat*]. Eddie! His hat!  
[*Pushes HOBART out after MERVYN.*]

TRIMMER. Well, I'm blest!

APRIL. Trim, Trim, I've found a co-respondent!

TRIMMER. You don't mean . . .

APRIL. No, Trim, I don't. But you never know.  
Handsome strangers can come in very useful.  
They can help you to get divorces. And they  
can help you to stop them! I shall ask him  
to tea to-morrow. [*Enter HOBART.*]

HOBART [*full of it*]. Do *you* live a Real Life, April?

APRIL. My dear Eddie!

HOBART. Do *I* live a Real Life?

APRIL. Don't you know?

HOBART. Does *Trim* live a Real Life?

TRIMMER. While my treasury lasts.

HOBART. Does the *Gasper* live a Real Life? Does  
the *public* live a Real Life? Does *anybody* live a  
Real Life?

APRIL. A cooling drink, Eddie!

HOBART. Real Life! That's the stuff. What a cam-  
paign! And April Mawne shall lead it. Horace!  
Damn you! Horace! [*Enter HORACE.*]

HORACE. Yes, Mr Hobart?

HOBART. Got your book? Right. Now then. [*Pac-  
ing.*] 'Let's All Be Real, By April Mawne.'  
Ahem! 'When Tennyson said. Life is Real. Life is  
earnest. He never spoke a truer word. Were he  
alive at this moment, what alas! would he say to

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us? The lives we live to-day are so shallow. So superficial. So tragically devoid of all regard for truth. For beauty. For the fundamental verities . . .'

CURTAIN



## Act II

**S**CENE: *A marquee in the grounds of Peveril House during a charity fête. Sound of band in distance. Enter MERVYN and RACHEL.*

**R**ACHEL. Phew! What a relief to get out of that crush! There are limits, even to the herd instinct!

**M**ERVYN [*out of sorts*]. It's just a question whether you prefer being squeezed to death in the fresh air, or suffocated to death under canvas. It's as hot as a hundred equators in here.

**R**ACHEL [*bantering*]. What are a hundred equators beside the thrill of approaching as near as this to the divine presence? [*Pointing to dressing basket with APRIL MAWNE painted on it in large letters.*] In her own dressing-tent! I'm just longing to see her.

**M**ERVYN. My dear Rachel, the divine presence, as you call her, is outside, being mobbed by her public. If you really wanted to be near her, you should have stayed there.

**R**ACHEL. Ah! my quarry is not the divine presence of April Mawne, but the still diviner presence of Mrs Hobart, whose form will presently hallow this marquee. You did say her name in real life was Mrs Hobart, didn't you?

**M**ERVYN. No, Rachel. April's her real name. April,

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April, April! It's impossible to think of her by any other. It's so like her.

RACHEL. Yes, people very often are like their names. [*Reflecting.*] Rachel! She was kept waiting fourteen years or something, wasn't she?

MERVYN [*putting his hands on her shoulders and looking at her intensely*]. Steadfast Rachel! And am I like my name?

RACHEL [*flippant*]. My dear Mervyn! Exactly. Aren't you the complete romantic?

MERVYN. Don't say it like that, Rachel. As if you disapproved of romance. Romance is the breath of life.

RACHEL. Hence our picture palaces. [*Sitting down at dressing-table and examining photographs.*] And are all these pictures of the blessed damozel?

MERVYN. If you sneer at her, Rachel, why do you insist on my bringing you to see her? Don't look at those photographs. All April's photographs are hopeless caricatures.

RACHEL. Wasn't it her picture that first attracted you?

MERVYN. Say, her wonderful soul.

RACHEL. Ah, yes—her wonderful film soul! [*Looking at photographs.*] This one's rather fetching. Is it Nell Gwynne?

MERVYN. Yes. In 'Curls at Court.' Her latest.

RACHEL [*reading*]. 'April Mawne as Mimette in "If You Can't Be Good Be Careful." ' 'April

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Mawne as "The Girl Who Couldn't Say No." 'Aprill Mawne as Lady Teazle in "An Old Man's Darling." 'An Old Man's Darling? ...

MERVYN. Yes. Sheridan, you know.

RACHEL. Obviously! 'April Mawne as Kiki in "I Love My Wife But Oh You Kid." ' Ah! that's *quite* charming. Is it really like her?

MERVYN. Oh, in a colourless sort of way. She's much more vital than that. She's youth and the poetry of youth personified. Age cannot wither nor custom stale her infinite variety.

RACHEL. Why don't you sing it, Mervyn? [*Serious.*] She looks very young to be the leader of this Real Life Campaign we hear so much about.

MERVYN. Oh, don't talk to me about that sickening sham!

RACHEL. Why, Mervyn, I thought you were one of its founders?

MERVYN. Me?

RACHEL. Well, its idiom struck me as strangely familiar. Only yesterday I found a circular in the letter-box exhorting me to purge myself of my artificiality, to liberate my imprisoned soul, by joining the Real Life League. I gather that all the members call themselves Crusaders. And that if I join up, I shall receive a picture post-card of the President, garnished with the words, 'To Crusader Rachel from Crusader April.' Such an inducement!

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MERVYN. Don't rub it in, Rachel. I daresay I did start them off. But the whole thing's a fearful travesty. We have Hobart to thank for that. I'm sure April hates it as much as we do.

RACHEL. I never said I hated it. And isn't it something, Mervyn, to have got the public's idol even so remotely into touch with reality?

MERVYN [*relieved*]. How wise and splendid you are, Rachel! You're like April there. You're big in just the same way. Her vitality and your grave wisdom! You'll simply love each other. [TRIMMER *appears in the entrance.*] Ah! here's Mrs Cerberus. The most wonderful woman in Christendom!

TRIMMER. Oh, there you are, Mr Mervyn. I've been looking for you.

MERVYN. Hullo, Trim! Let me introduce you. This is Mrs Trimmer—April's guardian angel. A brick to all April's friends—a ton of bricks to all her enemies—fairy godmother—trump of trumps—and now and again a bit of a joker, aren't you, Trim?

TRIMMER. Get along with you, Mr Mervyn!

MERVYN. And this is Rachel—Rachel Shaw, Trim. Guide, philosopher and friend to Mervyn Jones ever since his mud-pie days. An oracle of wisdom—a monument of sagacity—and as adorable as she is profound. You can't deny it, Rachel.

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RACHEL. I'm afraid Mervyn's being rather operatic, Mrs Trimmer.

MERVYN. Well, I don't get many encores out of *you*, do I, Rachel? How's the fête, Trim? Going strong?

TRIMMER. Strong! They couldn't have made more fuss, not if we'd been the Queen. We've had the whole crowd buzzing about us like bees. And how they did buzz, my oath! 'Isn't she sweet!' 'Isn't she a stick!' 'Doesn't she look a child!' 'Doesn't she look old!' 'Doesn't her hair wave lovely!' And 'My Gawd, don't she look different by daylight!' Lords and ladies tumbling over each other to say 'How do?' to us. And all squalling for autographs and buying rosettes with 'A Present from April' on 'em at a quid a time. You should just see Eddie. He's as pleased as a dog with two tails.

RACHEL. What's he so pleased about?

TRIMMER. The fuss. The hubbub. The jolly old hullabaloo. It's a regular picnic for him. And he's fairly flopped it across the Gasper.

RACHEL. The Gasper . . . ?

MERVYN. Paula Palermo. You know, Rachel. The new Duchess of Roxwell. We call her the Gasper because—well, if you'd seen her in one of her films, with the villain locking the bedroom door on the inside, you'd know why we call her the Gasper.

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RACHEL. I think I can visualize it, Mervyn. And is she here to-day, too?

TRIMMER. Is she here to-day! You ask Mr Hobart. Her dressing-tent's not a stone's throw from this one.

RACHEL. And has that got policemen all round it, like this one?

TRIMMER. Well, you can't be too careful, with all this aristocracy about.

RACHEL. Surely they wouldn't . . .

TRIMMER. Oh, wouldn't they, dearie! We tried to to keep 'em out with one copper first. Fat lot of use that was. In I come, into this very tent, and what do I find, sitting at April's dressing-table there, but a duchess or a countess or a mark-weeze or something—large as life, bold as brass and as old as the hills—having a good old go at herself with April's rouge, like a scene-painter renovating an old backcloth!

MERVYN. What did you say to her, Trim?

TRIMMER. Oh, I ticked her off all right. Told her she looked like a new pillar-box.

MERVYN. And then?

TRIMMER. That gives Eddie his chance. Off he pops to Lord Peveril himself and gets *our* guard increased to three. Quarter of an hour later, what's he find? *Five* policemen outside the Gasper's tent, if you please! Sensation in court!

MERVYN. Pinkerton's doing?

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TRIMMER. Pinkerton's doing. Eddie on his hind legs again. Back to Lord Peveril. More complaints. Spins a yarn about a couple of earls crawling under the canvas just when April's getting into her Turkish trouserettes. Lo and behold! *seven* policemen for us. *Nine* for the Gasper. *Eleven* for us. So it goes on, till Peveril puts his foot down, leaving us with a couple of dozen and the Gasper only fourteen. How's that for business?

MERVYN. And where's April now?

TRIMMER. That's what I'm getting the wind up about. They've billed her for 'Scenes from Famous Films.' Not that she'll do much, of course. Just go and make a face or two at 'em. But there's a Princess in front to-day, so she'll want to tittivate herself a bit extra for that. And rest herself too, after all this social mauling.

MERVYN. Of course she will. How can she do herself justice if she's worn out before she begins her work? Why doesn't someone bring her back?

TRIMMER. Well, *I* can't. You want a bit of muscle to get near April to-day.

MERVYN [*with alacrity, seizing his hat*]. Any idea where I shall find her?

TRIMMER. Where the parasols are thickest.

MERVYN. Right-o! Look here, Rachel—d'you mind waiting a moment? You're in safe hands

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with Mrs Trimmer. The safest hands in the whole, wide world. [Exit.]

RACHEL. You don't think Miss Mawne will mind my being here? In her dressing-tent?

TRIMMER [*busy at dressing-table*]. That's all right, dearie. Any friend of Mr Mervyn is sure of a glad hand from us. [RACHEL *sits.*] No need to ask if you're in the profession, dearie. I can see you're not.

RACHEL. What makes you so sure?

TRIMMER. Instinct. When you've been at the game as long as I have, you can spot the goods at a glance. You see, I'm a proper old soldier. Done everything in my time from tightrope-work to Shakespeare. There's worse lives.

RACHEL. It must be very sensational to be as popular as Miss Mawne.

TRIMMER. Oh, she's had her rough passages like the rest of us. In panto when I first met her. Fairy Queen I was—you mightn't believe it. And she was only a Cockleshell on Robinson Crusoe's island. That's her photo there.

RACHEL. Yes. Mervyn showed it to me. Miss Mawne and he are great friends, aren't they?

TRIMMER. Oh, yes, Mr Mervyn's all the rage with us, dear. Took us by storm as you might say. Made more headway with us in a week than most would in a year. [*Confidential.*] You see, we get so much of it.



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RACHEL. Miss Mawne must have swarms of . . . followers.

TRIMMER. Could have, dearie. But we don't encourage 'em. As Mr Hobart says, they're a lot of trouble, and the game's not really worth the candle. 'Why,' he says, 'if April was to spend a whole week on a houseboat with the biggest harum-scarum in town, like as not it wouldn't get into the papers.' 'Better not print this!' 'Dangerous to print that!' If there's one thing gets up Mr Hobart's nose, it's the prudery of the Press. But we don't mind Mr Mervyn. He's different.

RACHEL. Is he? Perhaps that's because he belongs to a different set.

TRIMMER. Set! You don't mean to tell me there's a whole *set* of him? Real-lifers? Gadding round after actresses and preaching at 'em till they don't know whether they're on their heads or their tips?

RACHEL. Real-lifers? . . .

TRIMMER. Well, I don't know. Mr Mervyn's always on to April to be more natural or something. Cuts up rough over her publicity. Fine dust-up we had first time he called. Though now I really do believe she'd *miss* not having him around pitching into her.

RACHEL. I daresay Mervyn's quite right from *his* point of view. But what's sauce for the goose

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isn't always sauce for the gander, is it, Mrs Trimmer?

TRIMMER. Now that's what I call talking sense.

RACHEL. I've been friends with Mervyn a long time, Mrs Trimmer. We were boy and girl together. I know all his strengths and I know all his weaknesses. And I know how difficult he is to resist—he's such a boy, and we all like boys. But when a grown man remains a boy, his fascinations become a public danger. People mistake his exuberance for real conviction, and are carried off their feet by it. And if the person who carries you off your feet isn't on solid ground himself, well—

TRIMMER. Why, you're both in the cart, aren't you, dearie?

RACHEL. Don't you think so, Mrs Trimmer?

TRIMMER. I do indeed, dearie! [*Confidential.*] And what's more, I hope you get him.

RACHEL. *Get him?* I'm afraid . . .

TRIMMER. Oh, get along with you! Don't you be afraid. You go in and win. And count on me for the fish-knives.

[*Shouting off stage. Enter MERVYN, with APRIL on his shoulder.*]

APRIL [*in high spirits*]. Here we are, Trim, what's left of us! Rescued by our hero in the nick of time! [*Jumping down.*] What a scrum! I feel like the winner of a bargain sale! Really, Trim, if

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Mervyn hadn't come, I believe they'd have had me stripped. Most of me's gone in souvenirs as it is. [*Throwing off wrap and revealing herself in Turkish harem costume.*]

TRIMMER [*sotto voice*]. Mr Mervyn's young lady, dear.

APRIL. Oh, Mervyn, why didn't you tell me?

MERVYN [*cheerful*]. You didn't give me a chance.

Rachel Shaw—April Mawne. I want you to be great, great friends.

APRIL. I'm sure we shall. [*Shaking hands.*] It's dear of you to come and see me like this. I'm not always such a tomboy. But those darling people have just about turned me inside out.

MERVYN. Darling people! I'd like to knock all their silly heads together. Body-snatchers!

APRIL [*sitting down at dressing-table and energetically assisting TRIMMER, who pulls off Russian boots, substitutes Turkish slippers, tidies hair, &c.*]. Now, Mervyn, don't be difficult! It's just wonderful to meet one's public face to face, even if they do treat one like something to eat! I can't help loving them for it. Could you, Miss Shaw?

RACHEL. It must be very exciting to be so popular.

APRIL. Mervyn thinks it's like being tied to a roundabout with the organ out of tune. That's what *he* thinks of my success.

MERVYN. Success! Ye gods! Better a super struggling to be a star, than a star struggling not to

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be a super. Here you are, acknowledged queen of your profession, and what good has it done you? A mob like that tries to make mincemeat of you. Do you ever get a moment to yourself? Not you! A dozen pressmen to breakfast this morning. My God! Breakfast with a dozen pressmen!

APRIL. *Really*, Mervyn! Fancy being jealous of journalists!

MERVYN. Jealous? Pah! Having breakfast with *friends* is splendid. But with every Tom, Dick, and Harry! You're not a freak!

APRIL. My precious innocent! But that's just what I am. It's my tricks and Eddie's brains that have got me here at all. You don't suppose they'd have any use for me if I were just a *lady*?

RACHEL. Pressmen are your Boswells, aren't they, Miss Mawne? Even Dr Johnson suffered an interviewer at meal times.

TRIMMER. Hear! hear!

MERVYN. There's no comparison. Dr Johnson was a great talker, April isn't a great talker. It's her *acting* that matters.

APRIL. And wasn't I acting for those Pressmen this morning? Showing them my Pomeranians and my Augustus John and my latest Lucilles?

TRIMMER. To say nothing of the omelette made by Her Own Fair Hands.

APRIL. With just a *wee* bit of help from cook, eh, Trim?

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MERVYN. My dear April, you don't know when you're acting and when you're not. You think *everything* needs acting. You're acting even now. You're like all the actresses that ever lived—trying to be somebody else in private life, and only being yourself when you've got a part to play.

APRIL [*piqued*]. That's not true, Mervyn. I think you're perfectly horrid.

MERVYN. The Athenians thought Socrates perfectly horrid when *he* told the truth—and they put him to death for it. [*With unconsciously mock humility.*] You can put *me* to death if you like, April. It's in your hands.

[*Enter HORACE, paper in hand.*

HORACE. Miss Mawne . . . Excuse me . . . Have you seen this? . . .

APRIL. What is it, Horace?

HORACE. 'Queries.' Just out. Where I've marked it. I think it means you.

APRIL [*bantering*]. Aha! Another wicked advertisement, Mervyn! Let's see what they say *this* time. [*Reading.*] 'Things We Want to Know.'

HORACE [*sotto voce, glancing at RACHEL*]. Oh, Miss Mawne, I shouldn't read it out loud.

APRIL. Silly child, why not? I've nothing to conceal—have I, Mervyn? 'Things We Want to Know. What Lady X said when she found the chorus girl in the boot-cupboard? . . . Whether a certain artist's model has not been responsible for

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the undoing of a certain model artist? . . . How many—'

HORACE [*pointing*]. No, here.

APRIL. Oh! 'Whether a famous film star . . .' [*flaring up*]. How perfectly monstrous!

MERVYN. What's the matter?

APRIL. How dare he? How *dare* he? Where's Eddie? I must see Eddie!

HORACE. I'm afraid he's busy—

APRIL. I don't care *how* busy he is. *Fetch* him.

MERVYN. What's the rotten rag been saying?

APRIL. Nothing. It's none of your business. It's none of anybody's business. Where's Eddie? I want Eddie. Why doesn't someone go for him? Where's my wrap? [*Seizing it*].

HORACE. Don't you worry, Miss Mawne. I'll tell him. Shan't be a jiffy! [*Exit*].

TRIMMER. Won't he? In this crush! Might as well look for a flea in a hayfield!

MERVYN [*impressively*]. You really want him, April?

APRIL. Yes, yes—of course I do.

MERVYN [*going*]. Right! Leave it to me!

APRIL. I'll never forgive him! Never!

RACHEL. I think I'll come with you, Mervyn.

MERVYN. Come on then. *En avant!* To the hayfield! [*Exit with RACHEL*].

TRIMMER. Now then, what's the matter, dearie?

APRIL. Look Trim! Eddie's gone and put this in.

• [*Reading*]. 'Whether a famous film star is con-

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templating divorce, and if so, whether the case won't put the recent matrimonial venture of another film star completely in the shade?' If that isn't the limit!

TRIMMER. H'm! Handsome strangers don't seem to be earning their keep!

APRIL. I told Eddie I wouldn't have a divorce. He knows perfectly well what I feel about it. And then to do a thing like that, behind my back. I'm simply furious!

TRIMMER. Don't you take on so, dearie. There's worse storms at sea!

APRIL. Well, there's going to be a pretty good storm in this tent. If Eddie doesn't look out, he'll find himself shipwrecked! [*Enter* HOBART.

HOBART [*bustling*]. April, our luck's right in! Buckle to! The Princess is coming to see you.

APRIL [*in a fluster*]. Princess! Where? When?

HOBART. Here. Now. The scoop of the day! Trim, get that table further out. Look slippy!

[*Helping* TRIMMER *with the table.*

APRIL [*busy*]. What do I do? Must I bob to her? How do you do, your Royal Highness? Stow these rags, Trim. Where shall I stand? Up stage? Or what about talking to Trim over here. That gives me a turn and a bit of space.

HOBART [*busy*]. Get a move on! Clean puffs. Make a show. I've been working for this since half-past two.

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APRIL. Or do you think like this? [*sitting at table.*]  
Give her time to take me in. She's sure to blink  
a bit, coming out of the sun.

TRIMMER [*busy, to HOBART*]. Now then, clumsy!

APRIL [*busy*]. Yes, it is, isn't it, your Royal High-  
ness? [*To HOBART.*] Perhaps I'd better be stand-  
ing by you. She might like that. Husband and  
wife! Tableau! [*Suddenly changing her tone but*  
*sustaining the tableau.*] Eddie, I'm furious with  
you!

HOBART [*busy*]. Furious! What about?

APRIL [*busy again*]. The divorce. Where *has* my  
wrap gone to? Haven't I told you again and  
again that I won't have a divorce?

HOBART [*busy*]. We can't re-open all that now. The  
Royal Party's almost due. For God's sake, shove  
those corsets out of sight!

TRIMMER [*busy*]. Don't you worry about your wrap,  
dearie. You show your pretty costume.

APRIL [*at the mirror*]. There! Read that! [*Flinging*  
*'Queries' at HOBART*]. I look a perfect fright!  
Where the hell's the cream?

HOBART [*reading*]. H'm! . . . Juicy little par!

APRIL [*fiercely, touching up*]. Did you know about it?

TRIMMER. Just under the eyes, dearie.

HOBART [*busy*]. Yes, I'd seen it.

APRIL. When?

HOBART [*busy*]. When it came out—this morning.

APRIL. Then why didn't you tell me? [*Swinging*



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*round and upsetting powder on the matting.]*  
Damnation!

TRIMMER [*on her knees*]. That's done it!

APRIL [*on her knees*]. Here, give it to me! [*Snatching 'Queries' from HOBART and scooping up powder.*]

HOBART [*on his knees*]. That's no good! Haven't we a dustpan?

APRIL. Eddie, why *didn't*—you—tell me?

HOBART. I didn't tell you because I thought it might upset you. As it has. Blast! Look at my trousers!

APRIL [*brushing HOBART's trousers*]. I don't believe you didn't see it till this morning. I believe you wrote it yourself!

HOBART [*definitely*]. I did nothing of the kind.

APRIL [*still brushing*]. Then who did?

HOBART. Ask me another. Some good Samaritan. There, that'll do.

APRIL [*back at the dressing-table*]. Good Samaritan! Alias Eddie Hobart!

HOBART [*at tent entrance*]. Haven't I told you . . . Good God! The Princess! Making for the Gasper's tent! [*Disappears.*]

APRIL. I don't believe she's coming at all. I've a good mind . . .

TRIMMER [*comfortably*]. Oh, no you haven't! You rest quiet till she comes. Take more than a bit of Royalty to upset old Trim.

APRIL [*re-touching again*]. I'll bet anything she reads *Queries*.

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TRIMMER. Not she. Bless you, Princesses don't read. It's all read *to* 'em. By ladies-in-waiting. And then it's nothing spicey. Just Walter Scott and *The Girl's Own Paper*.

APRIL. I'm sure to make a fool of myself! Eddie ought to have put me up to all the etiquette. Should we offer her tea?

TRIMMER. Bless your heart, Royalties don't eat and drink in public. They have a private tuck-in before they start.

APRIL. Listen! They're coming. How do I look, Trim?

TRIMMER. A proper picture. Pity it isn't a Prince, I say.

HOBART [*in an important whisper, popping his head in at entrance*]. Ready, April? She's just here. Mind you stand close to her. I'm going to wangle a snapshot. April Mawne and the Princess. Not a word. *Cave!*

[*Enter* PRINCESS, PEVERIL *and* LADY-IN-WAITING.

PRINCESS. And which is Miss Mawne? Ah! how d'ye do? You won't mind an old woman invading your privacy?

APRIL [*curtseying deeply*]. It's very kind of you to come, Ma'am.

PRINCESS. Not at all. Who doesn't want to meet April Mawne? After all, we've much in common. [*Sitting.*] Are we not two of the most popular women in Europe?

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PEVERIL. Her Royal Highness was much impressed, Miss Mawne, by your performance in 'The Call of Motherhood.'

PRINCESS. Yes, yes. We had it shown on board the *Spitfire*, when we were crossing to Geelong. Unhappily, I had to retire to my cabin just as you were overtaking the baby in your car. Most unfortunate! Was it a real baby?

APRIL. Yes—some of the time, Ma'am.

PRINCESS. How very remarkable! Come and sit by me. [APRIL *sits.*] How fresh and pretty you look, Miss Mawne. It's a miracle how you manage it, with all the work you have to do.

APRIL. We all have to work—your Royal Highness more than any of us.

PRINCESS. I?

HOBART. My wife was reading only the other day, Ma'am, how you get up at half-past six every morning to attend to your correspondence. She wouldn't like to have to do that.

PRINCESS. Mr Hobart, you mustn't believe all you read in the newspapers. I work, of course. But half-past six! Journalists do so hyperbolise.

PEVERIL. A palpable hit, your Royal Highness! Mr Hobart is a journalist himself. His wife's press agent.

PRINCESS. Really? What an admirable arrangement. I often think I need a press agent too. Just to keep my public legend in focus. Are press agents really useful, Miss Mawne?

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APRIL. Oh, yes, Your Royal Highness. I always say that half my success has been due to my press agent, and the other half to my producer.

PRINCESS. Your producer? Does that mean? . . .

No, perhaps it doesn't. And what is the charming surprise you are giving us this afternoon?

HOBART [*professionally*]. 'A Bit of Turkish Delight' Ma'am. In three dimensions.

PRINCESS. Ah! In three dimensions! That reminds me. I want your professional advice, Miss Mawne. I, too, am being filmed—in the cause of charity. Just one scene. But I fear I photograph rather disastrously, since I became so . . . formidable. [*Indicates figure humorously.*] Now, is there anything I can do to mitigate *my* . . . dimensions?

[*A photographer enters and begins setting up his apparatus unobserved.*]

APRIL [*embarrassed*]. I . . .

HOBART [*butting in*]. Properly produced, Your Royal Highness, you'd come out quite slim. It's all a question of contrast.

PRINCESS. Contrast? You mean that if I were photographed leaning against Mont Blanc, for example . . . ?

HOBART. That's the idea, Ma'am. Now, f'rinstance, if I were shooting your Royal Highness . . .

PRINCESS. Shooting me?

HOBART. With the camera, Ma'am. [*Gesticulating*]

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*both to illustrate his meaning to the PRINCESS and to direct the photographer.*] Everything would be set so as to lead the eye up and down the figure. Pillars, sweeping curtains, draperies, lights and shades. [*Still gesticulating.*] I'd have you perched on a high throne, Ma'am, with steps. A good man would make your Royal Highness come out a perfect sylph.

PRINCESS [*amused*]. I must pray for a paragon, then.

HOBART [*warming to it*]. It could be managed even in ordinary costume. There . . . You really couldn't better that, Ma'am. Just talking to someone. Like my wife. [*Signs to photographer.*] April, just stand by Her Royal Highness. No—not looking this way, Ma'am. Up at my wife. Like that. [*Gives signal. There is a flash and a click. The PRINCESS starts.*]

PRINCESS. What was that?

HOBART [*screening photographer as he bustles towards entrance*]. Extraordinary afternoon. Must be a storm blowing up!

PEVERIL [*as photographer disappears*]. Hobart, who is that man?

HOBART. Man? What man?

LADY-IN-WAITING. He had a camera. He photographed us!

PRINCESS [*rising in angry dignity*]. That was unpardonable! A deliberate affront! Miss Mawne, we are deeply disappointed.

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APRIL. Really, your Royal Highness . . .

HOBART. If you will allow me to explain, my lord . . .

PEVERIL. Explain, sir! We need no explanations.

That photograph must be destroyed. At once.

PRINCESS. Wait! Be good enough to let me have that negative as soon as it is developed. I wish to keep it as a memento of a most disagreeable incident. *[Exit with LADY-IN-WAITING.]*

PEVERIL. You will let the Princess have that negative without fail. If it were not for the fact that the public have paid their money for the express purpose of seeing Miss Mawne, I should ask her to be indisposed. *[Exit.]*

TRIMMER. That's torn it!

APRIL. Eddie, how could you!

HOBART. Well, everything can't go right, I suppose.

APRIL. Of course it can't, when you start playing mad pranks like this.

HOBART. That's it. Blame me. You'd have called me 'Darling Eddie' if I'd brought it off. But just because I have a bit of a fizzle for once . . .

APRIL. I shall burst into tears in a moment. Fancy being spoken to like that—by a princess, too!

HOBART. Pooh! . . . What's a princess! . . . You're worth twenty princesses. Two most popular women in Europe! She flatters herself!

APRIL. I just feel as though I'd got to start my career all over again.

TRIMMER. Stuff and nonsense! You wait till the

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morning, dearie. After a good night's rest, you'll feel as perky as perky.

HOBART. The whole thing's a mere incident. Unfortunate, of course. But it doesn't really matter two pins.

APRIL. Damn princesses! Damn press agents! Suppose t gets about. Won't the Gasper chortle!

HOBART. Don't you worry about the Gasper. We've got the Gasper fixed all right.

APRIL. It looks like it!

HOBART. You wait. Wait till five o'clock. Then you'll see.

APRIL. See what?

HOBART. I've got a trick up my sleeve'll wipe all this right out of your mind—and show their Royal and August Highnesses what *Democracy* thinks of April Mawne.

APRIL. Oh, what is it this time?

HOBART. A straight flush. It's all fixed up. You don't need to lift a finger.

APRIL. What's all fixed up? Eddie, I won't be kept in the dark.

HOBART. Well, as a matter of fact, you're going to have your tent rushed. At five o'clock.

APRIL. What!

HOBART. That's the ticket. After your show. I've engaged the principals—five bob apiece. Horace is going to ring a bell to attract the crowd. The police are sure to make a real good show of it.

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The mob will burst in—seize you—cheer you—chair you round the grounds—and I shouldn't be surprised if old Trim doesn't get a lift.

TRIMMER. 'Struth!

HOBART. I've got a fellow busy writing the newspaper report of it already.

APRIL. Then you can tell him to stop writing.

HOBART. Why?

APRIL. Because I've had enough of it. I'm not going to be cheered, I'm not going to be chaired, and I'm not going to be rushed by you or anybody else.

HOBART. My dear April, it's all arranged.

APRIL. Well, you can un-arrange it, then.

HOBART. Rubbish!

APRIL. It's not rubbish. Don't you think you've gone far enough for one afternoon with your divorces and your princesses and your Heaven knows what? I tell you I won't be rushed.

HOBART. But—

APRIL. There's going to be no but about it. If you don't cancel this mob business, I won't give my show, and I won't speak another word to you for a week. There!

HOBART. Oh, all right . . . I must say, it's turning down a damned good thing . . . You get a little reverse, and then you cave right in.

APRIL. You can do just what you like, Eddie. You can cancel your stunt or you can run it. But you know what I've said.



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HOBART. Oh, all right. I'll cancel it. Anything for a quiet life. All the same . . . [Exit.]

APRIL. And that's that!

TRIMMER. Now, do keep your feathers down, dearie! Take a good deep breath. You can't appear in public all of a fluster like that.

APRIL. I've half a mind not to appear in public at all!

TRIMMER. Get along with you. You stay here while I go and see where they're up to on the programme. It's near time you did your bit. And don't you worry. As the old song says, "Trust in God," etcetera.

APRIL. All right. [*At mirror again.*] But it's all I can do to keep my powder dry. [Exit TRIMMER.  
*Enter MERVYN.*

MERVYN. Sorry, April. Couldn't find Hobart anywhere. I've climbed trees looking for him. Rachel got fed up, so I dropped her at the show . . . I'll try again, if you like.

APRIL. For the Lord's sake, don't bring that man here.

MERVYN. Not? But my dear April, a moment ago—

APRIL. Well, this *isn't* a moment ago. I've seen him. I've seen *enough* of him. I've a jolly good mind to *give* him his *rotten* old divorce.

MERVYN. Divorce! What divorce?

APRIL. Oh, you may as well know, I suppose. Eddie wants me to divorce him. As a stunt.

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Thinks my darling public'd like it. I told him flat that if *they* would, *I* wouldn't. And now [*thrusting out* 'Queries'] he's gone and put it in the papers.

MERVYN [*reading*]. Well, I must say!

APRIL. Go on. If you *must* say, say it.

MERVYN. H'm! I don't think I'd better. But this caps everything!

APRIL. Oh, that's not *everything*, my dear child. We've had the *Princess* in here—what d'you think of that? And Eddie tried to take her photograph without her permission—what d'you think of *that*? And she slanged me as if I was a gutter-snipe—what d'you think of *that*? And now Eddie wants to have this tent rushed at five o'clock, and I've told him if he does I won't speak to him for a week, and he's gone to cancel the stunt, and I—I feel like a firework on the morning after Guy Fawkes Day. Oh, it's a *lovely* world!

MERVYN [*impressive*]. It *is* a lovely world.

APRIL. Poof!

MERVYN. My dear April, what do you expect? You walk straight into the jaws of Hell, absolutely of your own volition, and then you grumble that the fire's too hot.

APRIL. There's nowhere else *to* walk.

MERVYN. But—haven't I told you—?

APRIL. Oh, yes, you've told me over and over and over again. Everything in the garden's absolutely beautiful, Summer is y-cumen in, hark,

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Hark the lark, and God bless Father Christmas!  
Anyone can talk!

MERVYN. You won't let me do anything *but* talk.

APRIL. What else could you do?

MERVYN. I could *show* you—if I had the chance.

APRIL. What chance?

MERVYN. The chance that never comes my way because you're so busy getting yourself into messes with princesses. Have I ever had you to myself even for an hour? Much less a day.

APRIL. And what would you do, pray, if you had me to yourself for a day?

MERVYN. Teach you.

APRIL. All day long? Should I have to bring a slate and pencil?

MERVYN. Ridicule doesn't affect me, April.

APRIL. Well, where should we go?

MERVYN. Somewhere—somewhere where—some-where *glorious!*

APRIL. Not the Ritz, Mervyn. I'm sick of the Ritz. And when we got somewhere-where, what should we do?

MERVYN. We shouldn't *do*. We should *be*.

APRIL. Aha! To be or not to be! It all sounds very vague. I'm blessed if I can make out what your Real Life means when it comes to the point. You say Eddie's all wrong in his leaflets.

MERVYN. Of course he's wrong. Hopelessly, hideously wrong!

APRIL. Well then, what's right? Suppose I did

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you show me what *your* idea of Real Life is. Should we have to go up a mountain at sunrise—like you said in your letter?

MERVYN. Possibly.

APRIL. Well, we're shooting some scenes round Box Hill next week for 'Way Back in Honolulu.' Suppose I gave you a day up there.

MERVYN. Oh, will you, April—*will* you?

APRIL. Don't get so electric. I daresay I should only be bored.

MERVYN. No, you wouldn't.

APRIL. Well, and suppose I wouldn't. Suppose I tasted your wonderful Real Life, and suppose I found it Absolutely It? What would be the use? I should never get Eddie to go up mountains at sunrise.

MERVYN. I'm not thinking about Eddie.

APRIL. Nor am I. I'm thinking about myself. Damn Eddie! And damn you, Mervyn! I wish everybody'd leave me alone. I've got a very nice little private life of my own that neither you nor Eddie nor anyone knows anything about, and it's as good as anybody else's, so there! For goodness' sake do let's change the subject.

*Enter TRIMMER and HOBART.*

TRIMMER. April! Come along! April!

APRIL. Are they ready?

HOBART. The Gasper got a reception that wouldn't

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wake a watch-dog. It's talent they want now, not titles. They're gluttoned with goo-goo!

APRIL. Right! Talent forward! [*Posturing.*] 'A Bit of Turkish Delight—in Three Dimensions.' Don't glare at me like that, Mervyn. Get out of my light, Eddie. You men fuzzle me so, I don't know whether I'm in three dimensions or three thousand! [*Exit, followed by TRIMMER and MERVYN who collides with HORACE, entering hurriedly.*]

HORACE. Now then, Romeo! [*Picking himself up.*] Fellers his weight ought to show lights!

HOBART. What's the hurry?

HORACE. Pinkerton. He's done us.

HOBART. Pinkerton? How? \*

HORACE. You know that stunt you fixed up for rushing this tent at five o'clock?

HOBART. Yes, yes.

HORACE. Well, Pinkerton's got wind of it.

HOBART. Who cares? I've called the stunt off.

HORACE. Granted. But Pinkie hasn't called *his* stunt off.

HOBART. What stunt?

HORACE. Why, when he heard Miss Mawne's tent was going down at five o'clock, he got as busy as blazes, and kiss my sister if the Gasper's isn't going down at five *to* five.

HOBART. What!

HORACE. It's a fact. He's bribed all your men—you offered 'em five bob—he's giving 'em ten.

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He's bagged all your business—chairing, cheering, bell-ringing and all. And, my word! next time you meet him, won't he give you the glad, glad grin!

HOBART [*agitated*]. Well, there's nothing for him to smirk about. He hasn't queered my pitch. I queered it myself. And so I'll tell him. I called my stunt off because I realized it was a low-down dirty game. A low-down dirty game!

HORACE. I see him believing you'd called your stunt off!

HOBART. He'll have to believe it. It's the truth.

HORACE. It may be the truth, Mr Hobart. But it sounds jolly thin. \*

HOBART [*pacing*]. Damn it, Horace!

HORACE. I came past the Gasper's tent. The ropes are all slacked ready.

HOBART [*pacing*]. Blast!

HORACE. And they've got Union Jacks and police whistles.

HOBART [*pacing*]. Hell fire! Pinkerton indeed! Third-rate, muddle-minded, pudding-headed brain-cribber!

HORACE. *And* his relations in Australia!

HOBART. Horace!

HORACE. Yes, Mr Hobart?

HOBART. What's the time?

HORACE. Twenty to five.

HOBART. We'll have to look slippy.

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HORACE. What d'you mean?

HOBART. Ten to five. Miss Mawne's tent goes down at ten to five.

HORACE [*seizing hat*]. God bless you, Mr Hobart.

HOBART. No time for slobber. Let's see. Potts was managing the men. Fetch him. I want to see him. When you've got Potts, tell Routledge to go ahead with his copy for the papers after all. Emphasis on the fact that there were no casualties. Good-natured knock-about. Not a word to Miss Mawne. Not a word to Trim. And not a word to Romeo. He'll give the scrap a touch of realism. Borrow that bell again. Keep an eye on Pinkerton. And if you *should* happen to see any Union Jacks or police whistles lying around. . . . Here's our lot back again. Off with you! [*Exit*

HORACE. *Echoes of applause off.*

*Enter APRIL and TRIMMER.*

APRIL. Absolutely dud show, Eddie! I was awful.

TRIMMER. Don't you believe her. She went immense.

HOBART. Are you quite through?

APRIL. All I'm going to do. [*Turns to exit.*] Shut up, my darlings! I'm not coming back.

*Enter MERVYN.*

MERVYN [*breathless*]. April, you *must* take another call. They're howling the place down for you.

APRIL. The angels! [*Re-powdering.*] My wrap, Trim!

HOBART. No, no! Not the wrap! Put on this old

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coat of mine. [*Assisting her.*] There! Interrupted in the middle of changing! Always goes down.

APRIL. Bright boy, Eddie! Does he get it from his father or his mother? Coming, public! [*Exit with TRIMMER and MERVYN.*]

*Enter POTTs.*

POTTs. Here I am, guv'ner!

HOBART. That stunt's on again, Potts. Ten to five sharp.

POTTs. Sharp it is.

HOBART. Pinkerton's bagged all our men while we've been sleeping. He's giving 'em ten bob. Give 'em a quid.

POTTs. That'll fetch 'em.

HOBART. Same plans as before. Get 'em shouting, 'We want April Mawne.' You know.

POTTs [*momentarily delirious*]. *We—want—April Mawne!*

HOBART. That's the style. Horace'll give you the bell. Ring it when I told you. Make a row. Draw the crowd. Post some men on this side. And as soon as we're out of the tent—not before, mind—let the ropes go with a rush. The rest stands. Quite clear?

POTTs. As daylight.

HOBART. Right. And a tenner for you *if*. Hop it.

*[Exit POTTs.]*

*Enter APRIL, TRIMMER, MERVYN, and RACHEL.*

APRIL. There—that's done. [*Sinking into chair.*]  
Who says success isn't sweet?



## ADVERTISING APRIL

MERVYN. I do!

APRIL. Bow, wow! At it again!

MERVYN. Give me the glorious failures—the vagabond with a crust in his wallet, a silver penny in his pocket and the open road before him.

RACHEL. My dear Mervyn, don't be so Merrie English!

MERVYN. The fact remains that every handclap April got to-day was just another nail in her spiritual coffin.

RACHEL. Yet it was *you* who insisted that she should take that last call!

APRIL. Ah, Mervyn! What do you say to that?

MERVYN. Guilty. But I felt you deserved *some* compensation for all you've been through this afternoon.

HOBART [*watch in hand*]. Been through? What's she been through?

MERVYN [*isolating the conversation*]. Well, if *you* don't know . . .

HOBART [*waving a hand, still looking at watch*]. I'm not going to bicker with you, Jones. If you mind your business, I'll mind mine—and April's. What d'you make the time?

MERVYN. Damn the time! What the devil possessed you to put that paragraph in *Queries*?

HOBART. I did not put it in. What do you make the time, Trim?

TRIMMER. Twelve minutes to.

## ADVERTISING APRIL

MERVYN. I don't believe you, Hobart. Why, April herself told me that paragraph was yours.

HOBART [*calling over*]. April—am I to understand that you call me a liar?

APRIL. My dear Eddie, could I dream of such a thing? What's the trouble?

HOBART. Jones says you told him *I* put that paragraph in *Queries*.

APRIL. Well, yes—perhaps I did—in the heat of the moment. But I take it back. There.

HOBART [*to MERVYN*]. Hear that? Your turn to recant.

MERVYN. If I did, it would be out of politeness, not out of conviction.

HOBART. Ha! So April's a liar too, is she?

APRIL. Do be a good boy, Mervyn.

HOBART. Shouldn't wonder if he put it in himself!

MERVYN. Me!

HOBART. You. After all, who knows who you are or where you come from? You must have got a lot of damn good stuff out of April one way or another.

MERVYN. Do you mean to insinuate, Hobart, that I'm a journalist in disguise?

HOBART. Well?

APRIL. Don't be absurd, Eddie.

HOBART. You don't know anything about it! These newspaper men get up to dodges you and I'd never dream of!

## ADVERTISING APRIL

MERVYN. Rachel, I appeal to you. Have I ever written for the papers in my life?

RACHEL. Please don't drag me in, Mervyn. I oughtn't to be here at all.

HOBART. And I daresay you oughtn't!

RACHEL. What!

HOBART [*indicating MERVYN and RACHEL*]. Mr Tittle—Mrs Tattle!

RACHEL. Really, Mr Hobart.

APRIL. Eddie, behave yourself!

RACHEL. I think I'd better be going. Good afternoon!

HOBART. One moment, Miss Shaw. What do you make the time?

RACHEL [*with composure*]. Twelve minutes to, Mr Hobart.

HOBART. So do I, damn it! Good afternoon.

[*A bell rings. The uproar begins.*]

APRIL. What's that?

TRIMMER. Somebody's dinner-time.

HOBART [*excitedly*]. Pinkerton's funeral!

MERVYN [*as the uproar increases*]. What on earth is happening?

HOBART. I'll tell you what's happening, young man. This tent is being rushed.

APRIL [*jumping up*]. What!

HOBART. Get your things together, April. All you want to save. [TRIMMER *gets busy*.]

APRIL. You brute, Eddie! You promised! [*The up-*]

## ADVERTISING APRIL

*roar is now terrific; hooters, squealers, police whistles, shouts for APRIL MAWNE.*

MERVYN. You've actually organized this, Hobart, after pledging your word . . .

HOBART. Don't blame me. Blame the Gasper. If she arranges for her tent to go down at five to five, ours goes down at ten to. It's automatic.

*[More uproar and sounds of scuffle outside.]*

APRIL. Mervyn, I won't be chaired. Protect me!

MERVYN [*heavily heroic*]. To the death!

HOBART. Steady, Jones! Keep it down. Keep it down. No violence, I request. Nobody's to be hurt, mind.

MERVYN. H'm! *Aren't* they! [*Takes off coat.*

RACHEL. Perhaps *you'll* protect *me*, Mrs Trimmer.

HOBART [*at entrance*]. Here they come. No they don't. What a stand the police are making! Now then, April—

APRIL. Go away. I hate you! They shan't touch me!

HOBART. But you *must* let them chair you.

MERVYN [*folding his arms*]. Not they!

HOBART. You can't hold up a mob like that. Hark at 'em! Mad as bulls! Damn it, man, we don't want April in hospital.

APRIL. No, Mervyn, I don't want to be a casualty. It can't be helped. I shall have to be chaired. But *you* shall do the chairing.

MERVYN. Me?

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APRIL. Hurry up. They're coming! Bunk me up, Mervyn. There! Now show me to the public.

MERVYN. But my dear April, this is just the sort of thing I'm all out against. It makes me Hobart's catspaw.

APRIL. Never mind about catspaws! You've got me as high as your shoulder, but you shall get me higher still. You shall take me up your mountain!

HORACE [*outside*]. Now then! Let her rip, boys!

[*As the ropes are loosened, the side of the tent sags in.*

TRIMMER *slams lid of basket and sits on it. Uproar and confusion.*

HOBART [*receiving a blow in the stomach through the canvas from too enthusiastic a raider*]. Steady, you fool! No violence! I'm the boss!

TRIMMER. My Gawd! Talk about the end of a perfect day!

[*Cheers and shouts from raiders as they throng round APRIL and MERVYN and side of tent collapses, burying HOBART.*

## CURTAIN

## Act III

**S**CENE: Same as Act I. TRIMMER and PHOTOGRAPHER discovered.

**P**HOTOGRAPHER. Say, Trim, what's the matter with our April? Blest if I can do anything with her to-day.

**T**RIMMER. Oh, she's all right. Just a fit of temperament.

**P**HOTOGRAPHER. Temperament! Huh! I've had some of that. See this mark? Present from an Eye-talian soprano. And her manager called *that* temperament!

**T**RIMMER. Well, April's not one of your Eye-talianos. She may be a bit spikey at times, but her bark's worse than her bite.

**P**HOTOGRAPHER. Oh, I let her bark . . . But how can I do myself justice with her ladyship kicking up her heels like a two-year-old! If these pictures hadn't been promised to *Home Comforts* weeks ago, I'd never have got 'em at all.

**T**RIMMER. Don't you worry. She smoothes down if you treat her right. What's *Home Comforts* getting out of us this time?

**P**HOTOGRAPHER [*pleased by TRIMMER's show of interest*]. Here's the lay-out. Look at it yourself. 'April Mawne in Real Life.' Double spread. Number one, top left, 'Morning Greetings from

## ADVERTISING APRIL

Dido and Eno's—that's her blasted Pomeranians. Number two, top right, 'Counting the Sunny Hours'—with dove and sundial. Number three, bottom left, 'A Well-earned Rest,'—on divan, lapping up *Home Comforts*. Number four, bottom right, 'The World's Darling Lets the World Roll By'—in pyjamas. And number five, centre-piece—for which her starship is now dolling herself up—'The Sma-hile that Makes the Sunshine Jealous.' What d'you think of it?

TRIMMER. H'm! Got a bit of mould on it, of course.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Think so?

TRIMMER. Old as Methoosy. Still, you can't have new knickers every day. [Enter APRIL.

APRIL. Here I am. Get on with it, Tom. I'm just about fagged out.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Most effective, Miss Mawne. Just a touch, perhaps . . . [Arranging girdle.] No—the other was better. There! [Stepping back to judge effect.] Now that's what I call a real cameo!

APRIL [as PHOTOGRAPHER makes a dart at her again]. Oh, leave me alone, do. What a fusser you are!

PHOTOGRAPHER [professionally sententious]. It's the details that make all the difference, Miss Mawne. This is a *study*, not a snap. Time exposure.

APRIL [yawning]. Three minutes or three years?

PHOTOGRAPHER [laughing artificially]. Not as bad as that, Miss Mawne. This is going to knock spots

## ADVERTISING APRIL

off the last we took. [*Holding up hand and speaking with professional rapture*]. 'The Smile That Makes the Sunshine Jealous!'

TRIMMER. Better have two shots at it.

PHOTOGRAPHER [*still considering her*]. Yes. I think so . . . What about a touch of powder on the hair?

APRIL [*flopping into chair*]. Oh, Lord! . . . Flour, Trim!

PHOTOGRAPHER. Just a suspicion on the fringe. To take the high-light. Gives an aureole effect. Now Miss Mawne, please. As radiant as you can!

APRIL [*posing with mirror*]. Smile, damn you, smile!

PHOTOGRAPHER. Just a *shade* more spontaneous.

APRIL [*trying again*]. It's no good. It absolutely won't. [*Scowling at herself.*] Boo!

TRIMMER. Go on. Don't waste time, dearie!

APRIL. Right-o! Here goes! Hold your breath! [*Speaking through set professional smile*]. Too much?

PHOTOGRAPHER [*focussing, head under cloth*]. Keep that! [*Emerges and exposes plate.*] Thank you. Just another of that, Miss Mawne.

APRIL. Pouf! Wait while I rest my mouth. The public must be sick of the sight of my incisors.

PHOTOGRAPHER [*laughing perfunctorily*]. Now, if you please. [*Business as before.*] There, that's the last.

APRIL. The last? You don't say so! What about all the other things I do every day? [*Illustrating.*]



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'Miss Mawne Also Washes.' 'Miss Mawne also Yawns.' 'Miss Mawne Also Eats Asparagus.' 'Miss Mawne Also Finds Her Jewels Stolen.' 'Miss Mawne Also Bids Her Photographer Good-bye.'

PHOTOGRAPHER. Capital! Really, Miss Mawne, you know, you ought to go on the films!

[*Exit amused at himself.*

APRIL [*throwing things about*]. Thank God he's gone!

TRIMMER [*catching shawl*]. Here, easy with the wardrobe!

APRIL. What's the good of making the Sunshine jealous, when I can't get a tremor out of Eddie?

TRIMMER. Give it a rest, dearie! Eddie knows you too well for that.

APRIL. Does he? Well, you wait. You'll see!

TRIMMER. Seen all I want to see to-day, thank you!

APRIL. Don't you kid yourself! I'm going to put Master Edmund on a nice hot piece of toast, and see if he knows which side's buttered. And if he *doesn't*, I shall tell him that handsome strangers *do!*

TRIMMER. Oh, you and your handsome stranger. I'm fed up with his old guff. Since he blew in we've had nothing but trouble.

APRIL. And whose fault's that, I'd like to know? Not Mervyn's. Ever since Eddie got divorce on the brain, we've been all topsy-turvy! Would you let him divorce *you* without a murmur?

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TRIMMER. Well, I don't know. I never had any use for married life myself. Not after I rumbled Trimmer.

APRIL. Trimmer wasn't a bad sort.

TRIMMER. Not at first. But when it came to him lurching home five nights out of six, and pouring perfectly good beer down my back, it was time he popped off. Still, I will say I put him away proud. He couldn't have had a prettier funeral, not if he'd been the undertaker himself!

APRIL. That's right. *Be cheerful!*

TRIMMER. All right, dearie. But don't you go getting on the wrong side of Eddie over nothing. It'll all come out in the wash.

APRIL. Look here, Trim. I happen to be very fond of Eddie, God knows why. I don't care a damn about being April Mawne, and I do care a damn about being April Hobart. But I'm not going on like this any longer. I've got my pride. And Eddie can choose between me and my success. If he chooses right, well he can keep both. But if he chooses wrong, he'll find himself in the soup without either. See? [HOBART *appears in doorway.*] Shove this in the cupboard, Trim. Go along. [*Dumps clothes into TRIMMER's arms. Exit TRIMMER.*]

HOBART [*ingratiatingly*]. Hullo, darling! [APRIL *turns her back.*] Finished? . . . [APRIL *looks over her shoulder scornfully.*] What's the matter? [APRIL *scribbles a note and hands it to him.*] 'I'm not speak-

## ADVERTISING APRIL

ing to you this week.' Ho-ho! Bet you a fiver you don't keep *that* up!

APRIL [*with alacrity*]. Won't I?

HOBART. There! You've lost straight away. [APRIL makes dumb show of protest.] You *did* speak!

APRIL [*businesslike*]. Very well, I did. So I may as well go on. Sit down, do, and stop prancing about like a circus!

HOBART [*soberly*]. Look here, old girl, let's be friends . . . I'm sorry about yesterday and all that . . . But you see the hole I was in.

APRIL. Yes. And I'm going to see that you don't get into any *more* holes on *my* account.

HOBART [*with uneasy complacence*]. That's all right, then . . . Seen the papers?

APRIL. No, I haven't. What d'you take me for? Yesterday's tomfoolery's the last thing I want to see rubbed in by the papers!

HOBART. Well, well, you needn't worry. They don't rub it in. As a matter of fact, they've hardly given you any show at all.

APRIL [*indignant*]. Why not?

HOBART. God knows. Maybe your stock's on the wane.

APRIL. Then I daresay it'll go up again when we get our divorce.

HOBART. Divorce?

APRIL. Yes, divorce. You can get your divorce now, any old time you like.

HOBART [*astonished*]. You mean that?

## ADVERTISING APRIL

APRIL. Yes, I do.

HOBART. Good for you. I knew you'd come round in the end. That's A I. We can go ahead then.

APRIL. As fast as you like.

HOBART. I've got all the evidence roughed out. Brighton hotel, I think. That seems to be where the really best people go.

APRIL. You needn't go to Brighton, my dear Eddie. You needn't go *anywhere*. It's all going to be much easier for you than you think.

HOBART. Why?

APRIL. Because I'm not going to divorce *you*. You're going to divorce *me*.

HOBART. Don't talk rot!

APRIL. It's not rot! You're going to divorce me, I tell you.

HOBART. Huh! Think your public'd stand that?

APRIL. As if I care what my public would stand! This is entirely my own affair. Mine and Mervyn's.

HOBART. Mervyn?

APRIL. Yes. Mervyn. Does that surprise you?

HOBART. What the deuce d'you mean?

APRIL. Isn't it obvious? Mervyn and I are going to lead the Real Life together.

HOBART. The Real Life?

APRIL. Yes, the Real Life, my little echo! We're going to bathe before breakfast, read Dosty-offsky before dinner, and sing a song of six-pence for our supper-o! It's all a-ranged.

## ADVERTISING APRIL

HOBART. You're joking.

APRIL. I'm *not* joking. I've never been more serious in my life. April Hobart is going to change her name to April Jones.

HOBART. Don't be ridiculous. You'll do nothing of the sort!

APRIL. I shall if I want to. You can't stop me.

HOBART. Can't I?

APRIL. How?

HOBART. It's up to me whether there's a divorce or not.

APRIL. You mean you won't bring it into court?

HOBART. Damned if I will.

APRIL. Well, *that* won't make any difference.

HOBART. I rather fancy it will.

APRIL. And I assure you, my dear Eddie, that—it will—not. If you refuse to divorce me, I can do perfectly well without. Mervyn and I can live together all the same.

HOBART. In sin?

APRIL. It isn't sin, my pet! It's commonsense. Lots of people live together nowadays.

HOBART. You're having me on.

APRIL. I'm having you off. And in more ways than one. When I'm fixed up with Mervyn—scandalizing the public you've so little faith in—things'll be on a very different footing all round. For instance, I shall get a new press agent.

HOBART. New press agent?

## ADVERTISING APRIL

APRIL. Yes, my dear Eddie, a—new—press—agent! Someone a little less ambitious. Someone a little quieter. Someone who won't insist on April Mawne being snapped every time she listens to the Bark Fugue or counts the washing. Someone not quite such a cleverdick as Edmund Hobart!

HOBART. Better try Pinkerton.

APRIL. The very man! Thank you, Eddie! What a brain storm! Pinkerton'd give his ears to run me. He's been longing to for years. And when he does, won't *that* be one up on the Gasper?

HOBART. And suppose I refuse to go?

APRIL. It'll have just the same effect as refusing to divorce me. I shall go and live with Pinkerton too.

HOBART. You seem to forget, young lady, that I've got a five years' contract as your press agent, signed and stamped before we were married. You can snap your fingers at the law in Mervyn's case. I couldn't get damages out of him without bringing the divorce. I *could* get damages, hands down, if you chucked me for Pinkerton.

APRIL. You mean you'd bring an action for breach of contract?

HOBART. I could.

APRIL. Well, bring it, bring it, bring it! My God, Eddie! To think that a woman can leave her husband and can't leave her press agent. You *are* the limit!

[*Enter* MERVYN.]

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MERVYN. April, there's a canon or something downstairs wants to see you.

HOBART. Canon! Damn the canon!

MERVYN [*impervious*]. He says he's come about your Real Life League.

APRIL. Well, tell him to wait. You hook it, Mervyn.

HOBART. You do nothing of the kind, Jones. I want a word with you. What the devil do you mean—

APRIL. Shut up, Eddie! Go along, Mervyn. I won't have a scene.

HOBART [*striding up to MERVYN*]. If you think you're going to marry my wife—

MERVYN. Marry your wife!

APRIL. Don't be a fool, Eddie!

HOBART. I don't mean to be. And if Jones thinks—

APRIL. Mervyn doesn't know yet.

HOBART. Doesn't know! . . . Oho! What does that mean?

APRIL. Only that I just haven't *told* him yet. I had to make up my mind, hadn't I?

HOBART. See here, Jones, have you been asking my wife to do a bunk with you?

MERVYN [*very steadily*]. I have spent the last four weeks *not* asking your wife to 'do a bunk' with me.

APRIL. But, my dear Mervyn, don't you want me to?

MERVYN. More than I want Life. More than I hope for Heaven.

HOBART. Well, you've got your hope.

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APRIL. Your blood be on your own head, Eddie.

MERVYN [*with deep humility*]. April—you really love me?

APRIL. Doesn't it look like it?

HOBART. I don't believe you care *that* for him.

APRIL. Will you *never* be convinced, Eddie? Mervyn [*putting up cheek*] you may kiss me.

HOBART. If you do, Jones . . .

MERVYN. No, April, not yet. I want the memory of our first kiss to be hallowed by beautiful surroundings. [*Glaring.*] Hobart is *not* a beautiful surrounding.

HOBART [*raising his hand*]. That's a damned insult.  
*Enter TRIMMER.*

TRIMMER. That canon's still waiting. He's getting as fidgetty as an actor on a first night.

APRIL. Tell him I'm engaged. Tell him I'm in my bath and couldn't see him, not if he was the Archbishop of Canterbury.

TRIMMER. But he's got an appointment. Says he's come about your preaching in his church on Sunday.

APRIL [*surprised*]. Me preach a sermon! In a church! This is the first I've heard of it.

HOBART [*dejectedly*]. Well, that was the idea. I was keeping it for a nice little surprise.

APRIL [*flattered*]. Me preach a sermon. To a congregation! Oh, I say, Eddie!

HOBART [*brightening just a little*]. Not a bad notion,



## ADVERTISING APRIL

was it, April? You see the Canon of Barchester's been deeply impressed by this Real Life Campaign of yours. Says it's fundamentally a great spiritual movement, and the sort of thing the Church ought to back for all its worth. And as you're really head of the whole show, he wants you to spread the gospel from his pulpit.

APRIL [*reflecting*]. Wouldn't it be fun! Should I have to wear a surplice?

HOBART. You know, April, the way I figure it, you might be the biggest religious force in the country before you've done. Of course, I expect the old canon counts on collaring some of your public. But I don't see why we shouldn't collar some of his.

APRIL. Of course . . . if I can do any good . . .

MERVYN. You can't possibly make an exhibition of yourself in a pulpit, April.

APRIL. Why not?

MERVYN. Because the whole idea's perfectly revolting. The Canon hasn't the least glimmer of what's at the back of this Real Life Campaign. If he understood . . .

HOBART. And what's wrong with the Real Life Campaign, I'd like to know? Isn't it simply carrying on the good work you preach yourself?

MERVYN. It's utterly different. If I'd known you were going to make *that* sort of use of my ideals—

HOBART. Well, you ought to be only too glad we

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have. What *we* say is only what *you* say. *Be yourself. Don't wear a mask. Live for beauty.* It's just your stuff—only we've organized it.

MERVYN. Organized it! What's your Real Life League but a stunt to help April Mawne?

HOBART. And what's all your spouting but a stunt to help yourself. To my wife.

MERVYN. April, *are* you going to preach or aren't you?

APRIL. I really can't see why I shouldn't, Mervyn. Don't I think the world of your ideas?

HOBART. Doesn't she want everybody to hear them?

APRIL. And if I can tell a lot of people all at once instead of only one at a time, isn't that a great advantage?

MERVYN. You mean that you'd really be doing it for me and not for him . . .

APRIL. Of course I would, silly boy. Eddie, go and tell the Canon I'll preach with pleasure.

HOBART. All right—but on condition that Jones doesn't leave the room till I come back. I haven't begun on him yet.

MERVYN. You will find me here, Hobart.

[*Exeunt* TRIMMER and HOBART.]

APRIL [*businesslike*]. Now, Mervyn.

MERVYN [*advancing*]. Now, April.

APRIL. Keep your distance, please. We'll slow down a little. All this has gone much faster than I intended. I want to talk to you seriously.

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MERVYN. What do you mean?

APRIL. I mean there's nothing settled yet. Don't be too previous.

MERVYN. But if you love me . . .

APRIL. For the matter of that, how do I know that *you love me*? You've only known me a month.

MERVYN. A month, April! I've known you all my life. *All of all* my lives.

APRIL. And have you known Eddie as long as that too?

MERVYN. Eddie doesn't come into my life at all. Once the divorce is over, I shall forget him completely.

APRIL. Ah! That's where you make your mistake. There isn't going to be any divorce. Eddie won't.

MERVYN. He refuses to set you free?

APRIL. Absolutely.

MERVYN. But he must.

APRIL. My dear Mervyn, it's no good saying, 'He must.' I've known Eddie *more* than a month. And when Eddie says 'No,' he means it.

MERVYN. I don't care. We'll do without a divorce.

APRIL. H'm. Perhaps I'm not as ready as you are to face a lifetime of gossiping cooks.

MERVYN. I'll never believe that of you. Besides, haven't you *told* Eddie . . .

APRIL. Oh, yes, yes, yes, I've *told* him. But it all needs *considering*. You must wait.

MERVYN. I can't wait, April. I must know now.

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APRIL. Must know now, indeed! Why does everybody try to bustle me so?

MERVYN. Why do you tantalise me with promises you daren't redeem?

APRIL. I've promised you nothing.

MERVYN. You said I might kiss you. Isn't that the most symbolical pledge that woman can give to man?

APRIL [*lightly*]. Oh, that! Well, I'm woman of my word. Come along. [*Offering cheek.*] Here's your symbol.

MERVYN. Don't be flippant, April. A kiss is a holy thing.

APRIL. Is it? Then I must be about as holy as they make 'em.

MERVYN [*taking her by the shoulders*]. Look at me, April. Look me straight in the eyes.

APRIL [*looking him in the eyes*]. Grey. Both of them.

MERVYN. You devastating little minx!

[*He pulls her to him and kisses her passionately.*]

*Enter HOBART.*

HOBART. Get out of my house!

MERVYN [*steady, but a little flushed with success*]. I waited till you returned, Hobart.

HOBART. Get out of my house!

APRIL. You'd better go, Mervyn.

MERVYN. If *you* wish it, April.

HOBART. Get—out—of—my—house!

MERVYN. Very good, Hobart. I've no wish to

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quarrel with you just because we both love the same woman.

HOBART [*contemptuously*]. You!

MERVYN. You know where to find me, Hobart, if you want to talk. April—

APRIL. Oh, go along, for goodness sake.

MERVYN. All right. Good-bye, April. Until. . . [*Exit.*]

HOBART. So *that's* your Real Life, is it?

APRIL. What?

HOBART. Kissing.

APRIL. Mervyn says a kiss is a very holy thing.

HOBART. Holy hell! And bathing in forest pools!

I suppose that's a holy thing too! Yes! If it's *mixed* bathing!

APRIL. Don't be common, Eddie.

HOBART. Him and his mountain-tops! Pah! What's the difference between a mountain-top and a private room?

APRIL. I'm no good at conundrums, Eddie. The higher the fewer, I suppose.

HOBART. Exactly. H'm. *Exactly*. H'm. H'm. Pah!

APRIL. My dear, Eddie, don't make noises like that at me. I'm not a horse.

HOBART. Well?

APRIL. Well?

HOBART. And may I enquire, just as a matter of business, what you propose to do next?

APRIL. You'd better ask my *solicitor* any *business* questions.

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HOBART. So that's it, is it?

APRIL. Any *personal* questions you want answered, you'd better ask in the usual way—through *Queries*.

HOBART. *Queries!* H'm! I've got a word to say about that. D'you know what I found in the letter-box just now? [*Handing her envelope.*] Kindly cast you eyes over that.

APRIL. It's not for me. It's for Horace.

HOBART. Have a look at the other side.

APRIL [*turning it over*]. '*Queries*, 407 Fleet Street, E.C.'

HOBART. '*Queries*, 407, Fleet Street, E.C.' Not for me. For Horace!

APRIL. Well? What about it? Do you think—

HOBART. Think! Don't need to think! It's as clear as daylight. Our little Horace! He's the culprit. He's the blabber. And when I see our little Horace next, our little Horace is going to get the little sack.

APRIL. Don't be too hard on him, Eddie. I expect it was only what they call excess of zeal.

HOBART. Well, I like that! I like that! When you thought *I* put those questions in, it wasn't 'only excess of zeal' then.

APRIL. We all make mistakes. I apologize. A thing *you've* never done in your life, Eddie. But there! I forgive you. I've been thinking things over.

HOBART. What things?

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APRIL. The only things that matter. About you and me and Mervyn. I've changed my mind.

HOBART. Changed your mind? When? *While* he was kissing you or afterwards?

APRIL. Oh, not about Mervyn. About you.

HOBART. About me? What d'you mean?

APRIL. I mean that I'm going to live with Mervyn as I said. But you can go on being my press agent after all.

HOBART. You live with Mervyn and me be your press agent?

APRIL. Yes.

HOBART. Me be your press agent while you . . . Foh!

APRIL. I don't mind. I can put up with it. After all, you are the best press agent in the country.

HOBART. *You* don't mind!

APRIL. Well, one can't always consider oneself in business. You'll have to remain my press agent.

HOBART. I'm damned if I will!

APRIL. What?

HOBART. I'm damned if I will!

APRIL. Oh, say that again, Eddie.

HOBART. I'm damned if I will, I'm damned if I will, I'm damned if I will!

APRIL. But, Eddie—for the sake of my success?

HOBART. Damn your success. Good God! Good God, April! Do you suggest! . . . Do you think! . . . Do you . . . do you! . . . Go to Pinkerton! [*Exit.*]

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[APRIL stands looking after HOBART. Then she gives a little flourish of satisfaction, dances a few steps, stops abruptly as an idea strikes her, goes to table and begins writing. Enter TRIMMER.

TRIMMER. Hullo! Ordering your surplice, dearie?

APRIL. No. Cancelling a divorce. Have we got any 'Love from April' postcards left—the embossed ones in colour, with the gilt lettering?

TRIMMER. What for?

APRIL. For a keepsake. For my handsome stranger.

Who *did* earn his keep after all. I've written to him to say *Adios*.

TRIMMER. What's that?

APRIL. Oh, Greek for Be Good or something.

Listen: 'My dear Mervyn—I'm awfully sorry, but it's No after all. Since you left me, a lot has happened. Eddie says he won't be my press agent unless he's my husband too. And as I feel I can't do without him for a press agent, and he feels he can't do without me for a wife, the divorce is a non-starter. You see, Mervyn dear, I'm a temperamental artist, and my life can never be like yours. You must, therefore, put me out of your thoughts for ever, except as what I shall always hope to remain, Your sincere little friend and well-wisher, APRIL HOBART.'

TRIMMER. H'm! Does Eddie know? He passed me in the passage just now with a face like a wet week. What's he been saying?



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APRIL. That he's damned if he will. That he wants his little wife after all. That her success, my dear Trim, is only an also-ran.

TRIMMER. Well, what did I tell you?

APRIL. All right! Crowaway! I don't care. That's all dead and done with. Now for the happy Ending—the Great De-noo-mong. You'd better be on in this.

TRIMMER. Me! Where do I come in?

APRIL. At the piano. We're going to do this thing in style. Reconciliation scene by April and Eddie. Incidental music and effects by Trimmer.

TRIMMER. What are you dithering about?

APRIL. I'm not dithering. Reconciliation scenes are my strong point. [*Dragging TRIMMER to piano.*] Sit down. There! Eddie and I are going to be *very* sentimental. If music be the food of love, play on.

TRIMMER. But I can't. I only know one piece.

APRIL. Well, play that. Go on. Play it—*play* it! [*TRIMMER shrugs her shoulders and strikes up with 'Just a Song at Twilight.'*] Lovely! Only it isn't twilight. Oh, Trim, look at the rotten sun! How can one be sentimental in the morning? Let's have the old blinds down.

TRIMMER [*stopping her music*]. Are you off your chump?

APRIL. Go on *playing*, Trim! Am I mistress here or am I not? [*TRIMMER strikes up again.* APRIL

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*pulls down blinds, draws curtains and switches on lights.]* There! How's that? [*Powdering nose.*] Who'd know it was ten minutes to lunch time now? [*Powdering TRIMMER's nose.*] And a dab of fairy-dust for you, old love.

TRIMMER [*stopping music again*]. You ought to be in a lunatic asylum.

APRIL. Quick! He's coming! [*Singing at TRIMMER.*] 'Just a song at—' Go on! [*Crosses quickly to fireplace and poses dramatically. Enter HOBART.*]

HOBART. What the devil's all this!

APRIL [*emotionally*]. Our Reconciliation Scene, Eddie.

HOBART. Reconciliation Scene? What are you talking about?

APRIL. You and me. We're going to make it up.

HOBART. What are these lights on for? What's Trim doing?

TRIMMER. God knows!

APRIL. 'Sh! I tell you we're going to make it up, Eddie. I'm not going to leave you. I've changed my mind *again*.

HOBART. Well, I'm . . . [*Sinks into chair.*]

APRIL. There is a brief silence. Then April smiles—dabs her eyes—crosses quickly to cigarette-box—takes one—puts it in Eddie's mouth—lights it for him—lights one for herself—and—paces about.

HOBART. What rigmarole are you up to now?

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APRIL. Hush! Eddie smokes in silence for a while.

Puff, puff, puff! Then he sees a letter—on—the—carpet [*pushes it with her toe*]*—picks it up—go on, pick it up!—and reads it. 'Then you don't love Mervyn?' he murmurs, his eyes brimming—do try and brim a little bit!—And April says, 'Of course I don't, you old duffer. I never have. But I wanted to be sure you liked me better in the flesh than on the hoardings.'*

HOBART. Stop this fooling, April! Do you mean what this letter says?

APRIL. Can't you see I mean it, Eddie?

HOBART. And I can post it—just as it is?

APRIL. Yes. Only I want one of my 'Love from April' photos to go with it. Or perhaps it ought to be one of the sticky-backs. So that he can *really* wear it next his heart . . . if you don't mind.

HOBART. I don't care a damn about anything so long as you're still keen on me. So long as you don't want to divorce me . . .

APRIL. Or want me to divorce you?

HOBART. No-o. Better leave things just as they were.

APRIL. Not *quite* as they were, old dear. We've got to remember in future that publicity can be carried too far.

HOBART. What d'you mean?

APRIL. That your professional life may be public property. But your private life *is* your private life, and best *kept* private.

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HOBART. That's all very well, but . . . hang it all, if you're a real artist, your professional life *is* your private life. [*Pleased with this.*] Now that's damned true, April. You can't get away from it.

APRIL. I can and I mean to.

HOBART. But what is art?—real art? Tell me that? Isn't it just the business of making the most intimate private affairs public property? If it comes to that, what about love? Isn't *that* sacred enough. Yet look at the Poets. Kissing and telling! And making a damned good thing out of it! Royalties! Second editions! Knighthoods sometimes! And immortality everlasting!

TRIMMER. Have I got to go on?

APRIL. Of course you have. Eddie'd never have said 'immortality everlasting' if it hadn't been for the music.

HOBART. All right, you can make game of me if you like. But you haven't answered my point.

APRIL. Oh! can't you see how outrageous that divorce idea was? Can't you feel it in your bones?

HOBART [*shaking his head*]. Sorry.

APRIL. Look here! Suppose someone had brought you the scenario of a film. With the press agent husband wanting to divorce his film-acting wife—like you did me. Wouldn't your *first* criticism have been that the public'd never stand that?

HOBART [*scratching his head*]. Well . . . I suppose it might.

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APRIL. And why?

HOBART. I don't know . . . Yes, I do though. No Uplift in it.

APRIL. Exactly, Eddie! No Uplift!

HOBART. Couldn't have a domestic film like that without Uplift. Though I dare say the thing might be pulled off if the husband saw the error of his ways at the finish . . .

APRIL. As you do, Eddie?

HOBART. Oh, if you like. As I do.

APRIL. Play away, Trim! You really do see it now, don't you, Eddie?

HOBART. You mean that you and I must never let *publicity* interfere with Uplift . . .

APRIL. Oh, Eddie, you've put it in a nutshell! [*Nestling*] I'm so glad we're going to be real again. Really real! Like we used to be.

HOBART. Of course, it'll be fighting against odds. I don't suppose the Gasper'll come into this general disarmament scheme.

APRIL. Well, if there isn't room at the top for both of us, the Gasperino can have what room there is.

TRIMMER [*banging a finale*]. She *needs* it with her feet! [*Gets up, lets in sunlight again, and switches off lights*].

HOBART [*getting up and pacing*]. You know, April, that film idea of yours'd make a damn good stunt.

APRIL. How?

HOBART. 'Not Enough Uplift in Married Life.'

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Work in AI with our Real Life Crusade . . .  
Take this whole affair. Just as it's happened.  
Isn't it a lesson to millions of married couples?  
And a first-class show-up of the dangers of  
exaggerated publicity?

APRIL. I suppose it is, Eddie, really.

HOBART. Of course, we'd have to turn poor old  
Horace into a real villain. And the Mervyn  
stuff'd have to be worked up a bit—struggle  
with me over mountain precipice—and so on.  
That Rachel girl'd have to be lugged in some-  
how. She could marry Mervyn, if the worst  
comes to the worst.

APRIL. Yes, I think she very easily could.

[*Gong sounds.*]

HOBART. And I tell you! We might get the Canon  
of Barchester to appear in person—seeing it'd  
be all for a high moral purpose—and one or two  
M.P.'s and jockeys and things. And if you  
played the part of April Mawne . . .

APRIL. I don't believe I could touch it, Eddie.

[*Gong again.*]

HOBART. Nonsense. You'd do it on your head.

APRIL [*reflecting*]. Of course, me being your wife  
*really*, in private life, would rather fetch the  
public, wouldn't it?

HOBART. Exactly. That's the whole beauty of it.  
And I don't see why Trim shouldn't emerge  
from her retirement and take on *her* part—[*calling*

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*over his shoulder as they go out*] eh, Trim? What do you say to that?

TRIMMER. Me? Act myself? [*Throwing up her hands as she follows them.*] What a game!

## CURTAIN





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